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14. Clothesline
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17. Drop kick
18. Eagle split
19. Elbow smash
20. Eye gouge
21. Face rake
22. Fireman's carry ram
23. Flying body press
24. Flying clothesline
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32. Giant swing
33. Grapevine
34. Hair pull
35. Hammer lock
36. Head lock
37. Head stomp
38. Hip roll
39. Irish whip
40. Knee drop
41. Leg lock
42. Leg sweep
43. Manager interference
44. Monkey flip
45. Overhead toss
46. Pole ram
47. Reverse chin lock
48. Rolling scissors
49. Rope burn
50. Russian sickle
51. Savate kick
52. Scissors grip
53. Shoulder breaker
54. Slingshot
55. Snap mare
56. Step-over toe hold
57. Suplex
58. Surfboard
59. Turnbuckle smash
60. Wrist lock

SET-UP HOLDS

61. Abdominal stretch
62. Avalanche
63. Backbreaker
64. Backroll press
65. Belly to belly
66. Big splash
67. Boston crab
68. Brain buster
69. Camel clutch
70. Cobra clutch
71. Cradle
72. Crucifix
73. DDT
74. Figure four
75. Flying leg drop
76. Gourd buster
77. Hurricanrana
78. Moonsault
79. Neckbreaker
80. Piledriver
81. Power bomb
82. Power slam
83. Scorpion deathlock
84. Sleeper
85. Slingshot suplex
86. Spine buster
87. Stunner
88. Sunset flip
89. Superplex
90. Texas cloverleaf

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FROM THE DESK OF ...

BLONDER AND BLONDER

AS WE BEGAN SENDING out this year's Achievement Award plaques, we noticed an emerging trend among the winners. In 2023, the movie *Barbie* was a massive commercial and critical success. And in pro wrestling, 2024 seemed to be the year of the blond bombshell.

If you're reading this column, you've probably already perused the cover. Three of the industry's most captivating stars—Liv Morgan, Toni Storm, and Mariah May—are posed with their *PWI* Award plaques. At the risk of getting a bit "inside baseball," I'd like to draw back the curtain regarding how that cover came about.

As typically happens in mid-to-late-December, Awards voting closed. Votes were tallied, and winners were determined. Plaques were made up. Finally, in the thick of the holiday season, official photoshoots began to take place.

Before long, we started receiving back images of the winning wrestlers hamming it up with the fruits of their labor. We opted to feature three women whose performances stood apart this year—and who genuinely seemed thrilled to receive their *PWI* Award plaques.

Here's a little secret. If we'd had another week or two at our disposal, these women likely would've been joined on the cover by another fair-haired overachiever: Cody Rhodes.

With bleach-blond locks that are as synonymous with him as those neck and chest tattoos, Rhodes made a killing in this year's Awards voting, taking home the honors in four separate categories. The visual of "The American Nightmare" with an armful of award plaques could've easily landed the man his third *PWI* cover in less than a year. And wouldn't it have been cool to see Rhodes share that space with three women who also enjoyed the finest year of their respective careers?

Alas, due to the holiday *Smackdown* taping schedule, we couldn't guarantee we'd have the Cody Rhodes photo in time for our press deadline. (Indeed, as I write this column, that's still up in the air.)

As you might imagine, every *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* cover is vitally important, as each one provides a crucial first impression to would-be readers at newsstands. And, as fate would have it, this one had to be locked and loaded before Cody Rhodes could be handed his well-earned plaques. So, we decided to lean into the "Blondes Have More Fun" concept while spotlighting three women who certainly seemed to be having the time of their lives.

Of course, it's not only blondes who had fun in 2024. Dominik Mysterio had a blast garnering votes for Most Hated Wrestler, while Kelani Jordan was delighted to receive her Rookie of the Year plaque. CM Punk hasn't dipped into the peroxide in years, but he and fellow brunette Drew McIntyre took great pleasure in their award-winning rivalry. And Matt Cardona, who has been known to rock the frosted tips on occasion, was denied a threepeat as Indie Wrestler of the Year. (Turn to page 30 to find out who took his place!)

I've been blond exactly once in my life. Yes, there are pictures; no, I will not be sharing them. Regardless, this salt-and-pepper-haired editor sure had a lot of fun putting together the Spring 2025 edition of *PWI*. From the Achievement Awards and "Year In Photos" to contributor memories and your "Unofficial Official Awards," this issue is consistently one of my favorites to edit (and, yes, to read later on).

To rehash a sentiment I've shared multiple times in this space: I hope you have just as much fun reading it as we did working on it. Cheers to a fantastic new year!

Kevin McElvaney
Editor-in-Chief

PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED

FEATURES

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED
2024
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
★★★★★
TONI STORM
WOMAN
OF THE YEAR
AS VOTED BY
THE READERS OF
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THE YEAR IN WRESTLING

From our annual *PWI* Awards to the year's biggest news stories and championship wins, 2024 is examined in great detail.

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COVER PHOTOS: **LIV MORGAN** (©2024 WWE, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED), **TONI STORM**, **MARIAH MAY** (©ALL ELITE WRESTLING)

SPRING 2025

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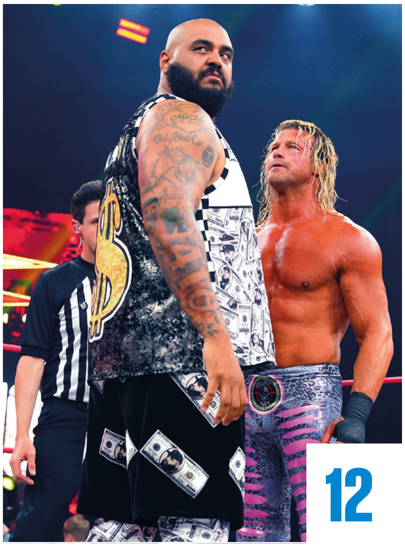
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Before THE BELL

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KOMANDER attempts to knock **BLAKE CHRISTIAN** from his perch on the top rope during the December 2024 Survival of the Fittest match. Check out this month's "Ringside" for results from ROH Final Battle and other news.

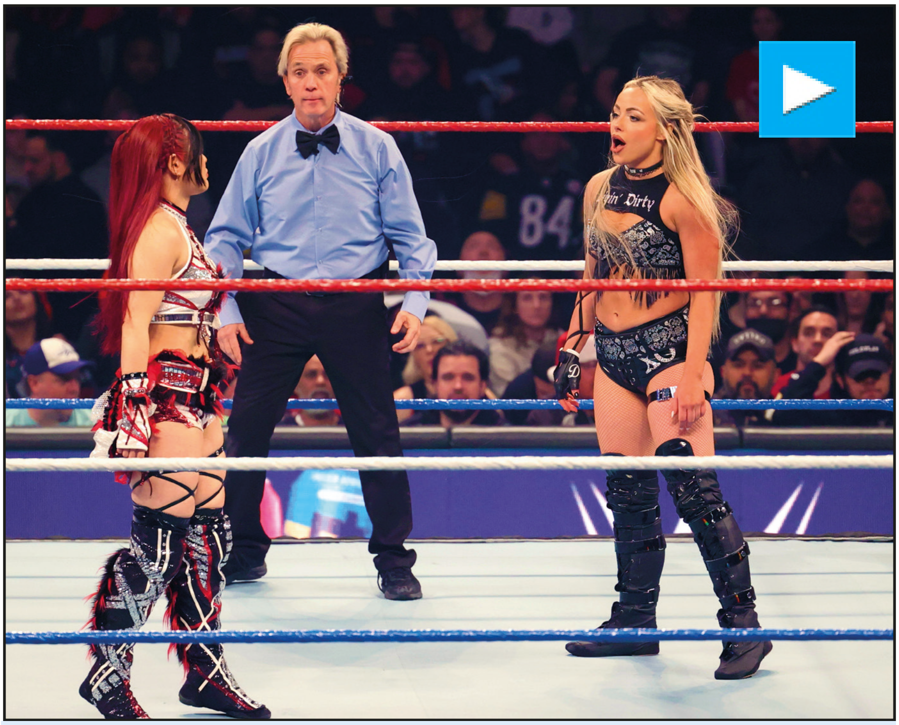
Photograph by **GEORGE TAHINOS**

BEFORE THE BELL | BY MIKE BESSLER

MEDIA REVIEW

SATURDAY NIGHT'S MAIN EVENT

The highest-rated WWE TV program of all-time makes its return to NBC with a star-studded episode.



Iyo Sky and Liv Morgan face off for the WWE Women's World championship. The retro attire of Referee Charles Robinson was one of many nostalgic touches that made SNME feel special.

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

IMAGINE, IF YOU WILL, walking into an ice cream store and meeting a vaguely familiar scooping attendant who puts forth an uncanny offer: a sprinkle-topped, double scoop of sweet memories guaranteed to transport you back to your childhood for a couple of precious hours. Once you're down the rabbit hole, you'll see old friends, relive your favorite memories, and you can even bring your new friends with you to partake in the sugary goodness. The best part is that it you can enjoy it without spending a dime. Now, switch out the whole ice cream motif for pro wrestling, drop the whole *Twilight Zone* vibe, and you have the basic marketing plan for the first installment of *Saturday Night's Main Event* in almost two decades.

For those who don't recall, *Saturday Night's Main* Event—now known by many as *SNME* in the present age of acronyms—was a pretty big deal during pro wrestling's 1980s boom. And many longtime fans still hold cherished memories of the show. To that end, WWE expended maximum effort in making the December 2024 *SNME* an event for the ages. Indeed, four out of the five televised bouts were championship matches, including a contest for the inaugural WWE Women's United States championship.

From the opening grudge match to the main event bout featuring Cody Rhodes versus Kevin Owens, there wasn't a throwaway showing on the card—even though all of the incumbent champs managed to leave the ring with their title reigns intact. The top of the card meeting between Rhodes and Owens even teased the always-intriguing "Dusty Finish" ending—not once, but twice—undoubtedly as an homage to the late Dusty Rodes, who was himself a standout performer on several original *SNME* shows.

Although *SNME*'s in-ring action remained grounded in the here-and-now, tributes to the show's heyday were sprinkled throughout the evening, much like Easter eggs on an old-school DVD. From a nostalgia-filled intro to an early homage to the late Mean Gene Okerlund, it's a sure bet that many viewers enjoyed warm fuzzy memories of wrestling's bygone days. Audience cameos by the likes of Greg "The Hammer" Valentine, Koko B. Ware, and Tito Santana added a bit of fun to the mix, as well.

Perhaps the most highly anticipated aspect of *SNME* was the return of Jesse "The Body" Ventura to the mic. At 73 years old, the WWE Hall-of-Famer and former Minnesota Governor held his own with the commentary team. Fans seemed to appreciate his efforts at getting current with WWE rosters and storylines.

The decision to have Pat McAfee call the action was somewhat quizzical, as any number of wrestling personalities past and present would have been far more competent on commentary. Arguably as overexposed as Logan Paul's ubiquitous Prime energy drink, McAfee's antics added little of any value to the already maxed-out pomp of *SNME*.

It's entirely possible that the novelty of *SNME* may fade in the course of subsequent episodes. But for now, WWE and NBC seem to have hit upon a winning formula that mixes healthy doses of nostalgia with top-of-the-card personalities and meaningful matchups. **We give *SNME* four out of five suplexes.**

TALKIN' TRASH

Here's a list of the **TOP 10 WRESTLING-RELATED ITEMS** you've been talking about lately and our tongue-in-cheek reactions to each:

AJ and Big Justice (The Costco Guys) pose with Will Ospreay during the special holiday edition of *AEW Collision*.
PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

10. THE OG BLOODLINE DEFEATS BLOODLINE 2.0 AT WARGAMES

With the denouement of the story at hand, WWE was assessing new rivals for Reigns and company, including a stable of insurance mascots led by the Geico Caveman.

9. THE COSTCO GUYS AND THE RIZZLER DEBUT IN ALL ELITE WRESTLING.

In a daring attempt at counterprogramming, WWE have reportedly penciled in TikToker Khaby Lame to win the next King of the Ring tournament.

8. IYO SKY PULLS OFF A CRAZY STUNT INVOLVING A TRASH CAN AT WARGAMES.

The memorable moment drew fire from Bryan Danielson, who criticized the Damage CTRL leader for not recycling.

7. AJ FRANCIS BRAGS THAT HE'S THE BEST HEEL IN WRESTLING TODAY.

At 6'5 and 275+ pounds, he's also an arch and a couple of toes.

6. CM PUNK SAYS PAUL HEYMAN OWES HIM A FAVOR.

Heyman settled the debt by agreeing to have the Pepsi Wave tattooed on his left pec.

5. DREW McINTYRE PUTS JEY USO OUT OF COMMISSION VIA A BRUTAL SNEAK ATTACK.

The bitterness reportedly began when Jey sarcastically asked Drew for directions to the nearest Renaissance Fair.

4. AEW RAKES IN RECORD-BREAKING TICKET SALES FOR THE FORTHCOMING ALL IN SHOW IN TEXAS.

Online AEW haters scoffed at the news, arguing that nobody really knows where Texas is anyway.

3. JESSE "THE BODY" VENTURA RETURNS TO *SATURDAY NIGHT'S MAIN EVENT*.

The news was greeted with enthusiasm on Wall Street, where Zubaz futures rose sharply.

2. MERCEDES MONE INVITES BEYONCE TO SING HER TO THE RING AT A FUTURE AEW EVENT.

In an odd twist to the request, Mercedes asked that Queen Bey belt out an updated version of Murray Head's "One Night in Bangkok."

1. WWE ADDRESSES NETFLIX BUFFERING CONCERNS IN THE WAKE OF THE MIKE TYSON/JAKE PAUL FIGHT.

In an effort to get ahead of potential glitches, Netflix might skip streaming *Raw* shows and just mail out DVDs of the broadcasts to subscribers every Tuesday morning.

WE HEARD THAT!

FROM AROUND THE WRESTLING MEDIA-SPHERE, HERE'S A ROUNDUP OF INTERESTING QUOTES THAT HAVE BEEN ON OUR MIND.

"I think it's amazing. This is exactly what we wanted back in the day. We wanted the same opportunities and exposure as the men. Now, this is a big step to have that level of competition."

*—**Trish Stratus** on the new Women's U.S. title, from a conversation with* PWI's *Scott Fishman for TV Insider*

"I think it's no secret to anybody that I am not going to shy away from a fight. If you come at me, I will start swinging."

*—**CM Punk** to* Raw *interviewer Jackie Redmond*

"Pro wrestling is more than just a sport about violence. It's about emotion, imagination, excitement, and fun. It brings out the kid in you. And that is what I want to do in my art. My art is meant to bring peace and calm."

*—**Lee Moriarty,** discussing his painting artistry with Artnet.com*

"We're the hottest company in wrestling ... When I was in WWE, I was like a backup offensive lineman. I was there when they needed me. I'm a quarterback, and it's time for me to show you that not only am I a quarterback, but I'm a Super Bowl-winning quarterback."

*—**AJ Francis** expressing his enthusiasm for TNA Wrestling in an interview with Wrestleholics*

NO MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET

ATHENA thwarted BILLIE STARKZ to continue her Women's World title reign, **CHRIS JERICHO** left **MATT CARDONA** incomplete, and **KOMANDER** overcame.

Athena and Billie Starkz technically adhere to the Code of Honor before their Women's World title bout at Final Battle. But make no mistake: This was a contentious bout between two long-time allies. PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

"THE FALLEN GODDESS" Athena entered Ring of Honor's Final Battle on December 20 as Women's World champion at 736 days and left New York's Hammerstein Ballroom with the meter still running. **Billie Starkz**, once Athena's enthusiastic right-hand minion, failed in her second bid for a storybook ending.

Athena-Starkz headlined last year's Final Battle, making a Starkz victory seem probable. But despite wearing star-spangled gear, Billie's super-heroic effort didn't pay off.

More than a year in the making, the Athena-Starkz bout provided all the drama one would expect. The question became whether Athena could weather the assault from Starkz' high-adrenaline offense. The crafty veteran was one move ahead for most of the bout, grounding the high-flyer by targeting her knee. **Lexy Nair** earned permanent minion-in-training status when her interference backfired on Athena at one point. Nearly a half-hour deep into the bout, Athena ripped off a corner turnbuckle pad, as Starkz dropped her with a poisonrana. Starkz charged Athena, who moved, and Billie's head hit the exposed turnbuckle.

The Women's champ climbed to the top rope and executed her O-Face corkscrew stunner. Athena scored the easy pinfall.

Likewise, **"The Nueve" Chris Jericho** retained the Ring of Honor World title against **"The Complete" Matt Cardona**. The challenger walked from the freezing streets of NYC directly into the Hammerstein. He battered the self-proclaimed "King Of New York" in the early going, and unfurled his Radio Silence jumping leg-lariat to score a near-fall.

This was more of a WWE-style match than other Final Battle main events at the Hammerstein, such as **Bryan Danielson** vs. **Takeshi Morishima** or even **Adam Cole** vs. **Kyle O'Reilly**. In the end, **Learning Tree** acolyte **Big Bill** distracted the referee, enabling **Bryan Keith** to smash Cardona with the belt to set up Jericho's pinfall at the 23-minute mark.

The most emotional moment of the night belonged to **Komander**, who won a six-man "Survival Of The Fittest"

An emotional Komander takes it all in after winning the Ring of Honor TV championship.
PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

match to capture the Men's TV title. Predictably, Komander excelled in the multi-person environment, overcoming defending champ **Brian Cage**, **Blake Christian**, **Mark Davis**, **AR Fox**, and **Willie Mack**. Cage scored most of the eliminations, finishing off Fox and Mack, before falling prey to Davis. Komander pinned Christian to win the title.

Overwhelmed backstage, Komander cried in the arms of ROH owner **Tony Khan**. That's my kind of boss. Congratulations, Komander!

In other bouts at Final Battle, World tag team champions **Dustin Rhodes** & **Sammy Guevara** beat **Vincent** & **Dutch** in a double-bullrope match ... Pure champion **Lee Moriarty** scored the biggest win of his career, downing former champ **Nigel McGuinness** ... Women's TV champion **Red Velvet** used a wrench(?!) to knock out **Leyla Hirsch** ... **Jay Lethal** defeated **QT Marshall** ... **Katsuyori Shibata** beat **Tommy Billington** in a textbook grappling bout ... **Atlantis Jr.** pinned **Mansoor** despite **Mason's** best efforts.

The assumption remains that Ring of Honor will land a prime-time slot on Warner Bros. Discovery's TruTV in 2025. TruTV, which launched as Court TV in 1991 and re-branded in 2008 to emphasize reality programming, has reinvented itself yet again with an emphasis on live sports. ROH would be an ideal franchise for the network.

ROH's Final Battle underscored the fact that wrestling's top companies opted to hold steady, with no radical changes, in major events to close the year 2024. It was a positive sign that the industry's powerbrokers believed in their respective products, and simply wanted to prepare for an even bigger 2025.

Another example was TNA's Final Resolution on December 13. **AJ Francis**, who has become a mercenary of sorts in the world outside WWE, wasn't widely expected to unseat World champion **Nic Nemeth**, but he was a credible opponent to headline the company's final pay-per-view of the year. Nemeth had to overcome Francis' size and raw athleticism, as well as the interference of **KC Navarro**. Nemeth superkicked the former NFL player

AJ Francis and Nic Nemeth prepare to face off in the latter's final TNA World title defense of 2024.
PHOTO COURTESY TNA WRESTLING

Jax Dane applies a sleeperhold to the masked Zyon. The "Dane Event" was a powerful in-ring presence and very well-liked by his peers in the National Wrestling Alliance.

COURTESY OF NWA

and finished him off with his Danger Zone reverse bulldog.

Navarro, however, attacked Nemeth afterward, prompting **Joe Hendry** to run in and save the champ. Nemeth and Hendry then locked eyes for a stare-down.

Hendry had emerged victorious in an outstanding field of competitors—**Josh Alexander, Steve Maclin,** and **Mike Santana**—to determine the top contender to Nemeth's title at Genesis. Hendry pinned Alexander with a Standing Ovation, and then earned one himself.

We believe Hendry will become champion in 2025. Maybe it will happen at Genesis.

Former heavyweight champion **Tessa Blanchard** returned to the company at Final Resolution, donning a hood and attacking **Jordynne Grace** during her bout against **Rosemary**. Grace and Knockouts champion **Masha Slamovich**, who defeated **Tasha Steelz** in a falls-count-anywhere match at the event, are among Blanchard's targets.

In other bouts, World tag team champions **The Hardys** beat **Eddie Edwards** & **Brian Myers** in a tables match ... **Ace Austin** pinned U.K. veteran **Trent Seven** ... **The Rascalz** beat **Jake Something** (going solo without his partner, an injured **Alexander Hammerstone**) and the team of **Sami Callihan** & **PCO** ... X Division champion **Moose** pinned **KUSHIDA**.

Speaking of the X division title, **"Speedball" Mike Bailey**, who worked hard to enhance that championship over the past couple of years, has reached the end of his TNA contract and appears headed to AEW, where there are so many dream opponents: **Will Ospreay, Ricochet, Kyle Fletcher,** and Komander, to name a few.

Despite social-media calls for AEW to emphasize storylines over in-ring action, the Continental Classic continued to deliver superb matches for AEW's most die-hard fans on the weekend before Christmas. After ROH's Final Battle on Friday, December 20, the Hammerstein Ballroom was the site of *AEW Collision* on Saturday night.

Ricochet, after inadvertently knocking the referee down a couple of times, exploited the opening by nailing Ospreay with his Spirit Gun running elbow and scoring the pinfall. Despite peppering Ricochet with some boos, the crowd at Hammerstein knew they'd witnessed a fantastic encounter.

AEW offered more C2 bouts on Sunday with a special holiday taping of *Dynamite*, where **Brody King** had a breakout performance in his hard-fought loss to Ospreay, and Ricochet battled **Darby Allin** to a 20-minute draw. Komander, hot off his TV title win at Final Battle, moonsaulted **Claudio Castagnoli** for another big victory. And **Kazuchika Okada** floored **Shelton Benjamin** with a Rainmaker lariat for the pin.

In the case of *Collision*, a technical dream match—Ricochet vs. Ospreay—scored big numbers. The December 21 edition attracted 635,000 viewers, doubling the number from the previous week and outscoring the previous four episodes of *Dynamite*. Wow!

Before former WCW head **Eric Bischoff** appeared on *NXT*, he was the special matchmaker for Major League Wrestling's One Shot at New York's Melrose Ballroom. At the December 7 show, World tag champs **Satoshi Kojima** & **Okumura** beat **Contra Unit's Minoru Suzuki** & **Ikuro Kwon**, and **Matt Riddle** retained his World title opportunity against the newest member of **St. Laurent's World Titan Federation, Donovan Dijak**.

Tapings for MLW's Holiday Rush (posted on YouTube on December 24) also took place, with Kojima successfully defending the World heavyweight title against **Ultimo Guerrero**, and **Tom Lawlor** defeating **Timothy Thatcher** by technical submission.

Luke Hawx told me several months ago that he and his son, **PJ Hawx**, weren't getting along. That personal matter turned very public when these two opted to battle inside a steel cage in front of 1,342 fans at WildKat Wrestling's Revolution Rumble, held at the Pontchartrain Center in Kenner, Louisiana.

Family fights tend to be among the most brutal, with father and son bleeding, and PJ hitting Luke with a cross-bodyblock off the top of the cage! Luke somehow survived, powerslamming PJ off the top rope. Paramedics rushed into the ring as PJ lay motionless and Luke obviously distraught. It turned out to be a possum play, as PJ attacked his father from behind, but Luke rallied to score the winning pinfall.

Luke extended his hand to his son, but PJ slapped him in the face and gave him a middle finger. It seems this family feud will continue.

"It was the most emotional event and match I have ever had in my career," Luke told me. "And one of the greatest matches I have ever had ... also one of the stiffest!"

Also at the December 7 event, **Simon Phillips** won the 2024 Revolution Rumble ... **Brian Kendrick** beat **Danny Flamingo** and **Brady Pierce** to become WildKat champion ... **Nate Bradley** defeated **Jace Valor** in a two-out-of-three-falls bout to win the New Revolution title, prompting Valor's retirement ... Tag team champs **Slime Szn** beat **The Ringworms**.

This 'n' that: The **New Day** implosion is developing into the most exciting week-by-week story in WWE. They attacked Big E! They upset **Kofi Kingston's** mom! Kingston and **Xavier Woods** are on pace to become tag team champs yet again ... **Lexis King** beat **Charlie Dempsey** for the NXT Heritage Cup, with help from Dempsey's own father, **William Regal** ... *Raw* star **Maxxine Dupri** and *NXT* up-and-comer **Anthony Luke** got engaged. Best wishes to both of you!

Before we part, I want to acknowledge the deaths of two great stars. **Rey Misterio Sr.**, the uncle of **Rey Mysterio**, passed away on December 20 at age 66. A former IWC World middleweight champ and AAA stalwart, Misterio is best known for training a generation of stars, including nephew Rey, **Konnan**, **Psicosis**, **Halloween**, and **Damian 666**.

Longtime NWA headliner **Jax Dane** died after complications from a heart attack on Christmas Day at the too-young age of 48. Dane defeated **Hiroyoshi Tenzan** for the NWA heavyweight title in 2015 and reigned for 419 days, before losing to **Tim Storm**.

"He was my brother in every sense of the word, and I loved him," said Storm. "He made me promise two things: Don't share what's happening with anyone, it's a private thing. And promise me you will get your heart checked. He would ask you to do the same."

That's all for now. Save a ringside seat for me.

NEWS ANALYSIS

HARRY BURKETT wonders why wins and losses don't matter in ROH, thanks **TONY KHAN** for the gift of wrestling during the holidays, and pays tribute to two greats.

RANKINGS OF DISHONOR

One of my tasks is to update fellow members of our Ratings committee on ROH happenings. Though Tony Khan allegedly respects win-loss records, I can assure you this has no bearing on who is receiving title shots. Chris Jericho, Tomohiro Ishii, and Matt Cardona—all non-ROH talents—have been the World title players as of late. What about Lee Moriarty or Lee Johnson or Matt Taven? *Hmmph!*

CLASSIC ENCOUNTERS

Kudos to Tony Khan for three nights of fantastic action from New York's Hammerstein Ballroom: ROH's Final Battle, a live *AEW Collision*, and an *AEW Dynamite* taping. The Continental Classic dominated the second and third nights, with the final being held at the Worlds End PPV on December 28. AEW presents the greatest in-ring action on a weekly basis. Storylines? Maybe they'll come in 2025.

UNCLE REY

Despite an in-ring career that spanned 1976 to 2009, Rey Misterio will be remembered for mentoring his nephew, Rey Misterio Jr. The Bloodline demonstrates that sometimes legacy is more important than real-time accomplishments. Rocky Johnson will always be known as Dwayne Johnson's father, and Sika Anoa'i will be forever known as Roman Reigns' dad. Likewise, Rey Misterio, through his legacy, changed the industry.

THE DANE EVENT

That's what Jax Dane called himself. And, at 6'4" and 310 pounds, he personified what many believe a professional wrestler should look like. He understood the honor of being a former NWA champion and unleashed his inner Stan Hansen in matches against Tim Storm and Anthony Mayweather. I thoroughly enjoyed his rough persona and the credibility of his presence and his matches. Godspeed, Jax.

2024

THE YEAR IN PRO WRESTLING

SECTION COMPILED BY JASON McVEIGH, AL CASTLE, HARRY BURKETT, AND KEVIN McELVANEY

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COMEBACK
OF THE YEAR
★★★★★
AS VOTED BY
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MAGAZINE

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ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

KELANI JORDAN HAS burst onto the wrestling scene and made an undeniable impact in a short span of time.

Although she failed to win the NXT Women's Breakout tournament to close out 2023, the Michigan State grad broke out nonetheless. Thanks to her superlative athletic skills, competitive nature, and evident desire to be the best, Jordan flew up the ranks of NXT. At Battleground, she climbed the proverbial and literal ladder to become women's North American champion—besting five other top NXT women for the glory of being the inaugural titleholder.

The fact that the top two runners-up in our voting this year are also two women from NXT shows the kind of stiff competition Jordan faced on a regular basis in 2024.

Despite her impressive gymnastics background, our latest Rookie of the Year has learned much about her new sport during her brief, yet formative time in the industry. Wrestling is, after all, a very different physical beast. However, Kelani Jordan has taken to it with aplomb. Don't be surprised if, just a year or two from now, she's in the running for Woman of the Year. For now, when it comes to Rookie of the Year honors, our readers believe "No one does it like 'lani."

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JAIDA PARKER

Parker's rookie run has been nothing short of phenomenal. Her blend of athleticism and charisma has made her an instant standout. From high-flying maneuvers to powerful strikes, Parker has showcased a diverse skill set that has impressed fans and NXT bigwigs alike. At No Mercy on September 1, she even came close to ending the epic NXT Women's title reign of Roxanne Perez. Parker's dedication to her craft and her unflappable confidence have placed her into position as one of the most promising newcomers in the wrestling industry. With 20% of the votes in this category, it seems our readers agree.

20%

KARMEN PETROVIC

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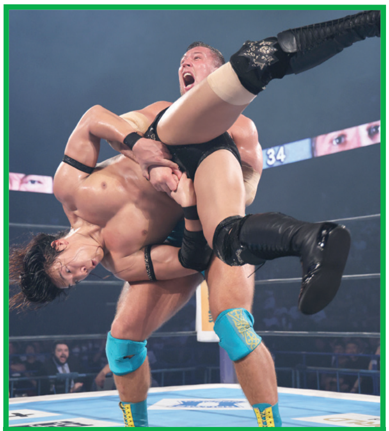
8%

It's rare that a WWE-contracted wrestler appears in other promotions, let alone an upstart like Petrovic. And yet, in 2024, the former karate competitor did just that. The promising rookie's matches in TNA and GCW speak volumes as to Petrovic's desire to improve and succeed. On her home turf in NXT, she picked up notable wins over Wren Sinclair, Arianna Grace, and Lola Vice. With a legit martial arts background and an obvious passion for the wrestling business, Petrovic's performances separated her from the crowded NXT pack this year. Don't be shocked to see her deliver more of the same in 2025.



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OLEG BOLTIN

When you've got the likes of Toru Yano and Hiroshi Tanahashi singing your praises *and* eager to team with you, you've got to be impressing people. Indeed, Oleg Boltin has taken New Japan Pro-Wrestling by storm this year, making a strong case for Rookie of the Year. With powerful strikes and superlative grappling skills, the Kazakh competitor has gamely impressed fans in Japan. He won the NEVER openweight six-man championship twice with the aforementioned Yano and Tanahashi. Despite the veteran talent he teamed with, Boltin was equally responsible for their tandem success.

7%

17% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Victoria Yuzuki, Rian, Paul Walter Hauser, ZONES

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED
2024
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
★★★★★
KELANI JORDAN
ROOKIE
OF THE YEAR
AS VOTED BY
THE READERS OF
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MAGAZINE

48%

KELANI JORDAN

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ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

WHILE IT MAKES sense that the winner of this award is someone who has made improvements to their in-ring game, it also encompasses more than that. Sometimes, it's about improving one's confidence, character, and promo skills. In 2024, our readers felt no one quite did all that like Mariah May.

Those who saw her wrestle in World Wonder Ring Stardom will likely tell you that May always had "it." But now, thanks to her meteoric rise through AEW, a whole lot more people believe the same. With matches characterized by crisp execution, innovative moves, and a captivating aura, May ended 2024 in a much better place than where she started it.

Perhaps some credit should be given to her former mentor, Toni Storm. May was able to get an up-close look at the Australian's top-notch wrestling and character work. When the time came to break away from Storm, May showcased a confidence and charisma that even longtime fans hadn't seen from the blond bombshell.

Calling herself "The Glamour," May wasted little time proving that she was no second fiddle. A stunning Women's title victory soon followed; and with it, a proclamation that Mariah May is not only an improved performer, but one of the best in the business.

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NIA JAX

Proof that second chances are often the best ones, Nia Jax's latest stint with WWE has seen her thrive in ways that she never did during her initial run with the company. Jax should be commended for not only working on her wrestling skills but also her strength and conditioning. She shed pounds, and, in the process, added gold—becoming a two-time WWE Women's champion. A Queen of the Ring victory also got added to her resume alongside plenty of other wins. Hustle does not go unnoticed by our readers, Ms. Jax. Good job.

19%

OBA FEMI

The Nigerian colossus seemingly came out of nowhere to become one of the most talked-about phenoms in wrestling. With little more than a dozen matches in his career to that point, Femi entered the NXT Men's Breakout tournament and, well, broke out ... in a big way. Just a few weeks after that, he toppled Dragon Lee to become North American champion. Sometimes, the life of a champion can wear a wrestler down, but not Femi. He embarked on a 273-day reign in which he visibly leveled up as the weeks passed. For someone with so little experience, the improvements—and brutality he unleashed—were frightening.

14%

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9%

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MAXXINE DUPRI

Being a wrestler is hard even for the experienced. But for someone like Maxxine Dupri, who is pretty much learning on the job, it can be downright daunting. After being on the wrong end of heckles and boos at a WWE live event, the determined Dupri would not be deterred. Instead, she rolled up her sleeves and got to work. Throwing herself head-first into training and competition, the Alpha Academy alum made incremental gains every day. By the end of the year, she had done enough to garner 9% of our reader votes here. Hard work pays off, kids.

35% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Megan Bayne, Luke Jacobs, Mai Sakurai, Ash By Elegance

23%

MARIAH MAY

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED
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MARIAH MAY
MOST
IMPROVED WRESTLER
OF THE YEAR
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MAGAZINE
AEW
WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPION

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MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

WHAT A YEAR it has been for Liv Morgan. Not only did she win the WWE Women's World championship and the heart of Dominik Mysterio—she now takes home our award for Comeback of the Year. Although she managed to do so by a razor-thin margin of just 1%, we don't think that diminishes her victory at all.

After an injury hiatus, Morgan made her return at the Royal Rumble, entering at number 30 in the Women's match and eliminating formidable opponents including Zoey Stark and Jade Cargill. This impressive performance showcased her determination to re-establish herself as a force within the WWE women's division. Yet, this was only a taste of what was to come.

As the year progressed, Morgan's star continued to rise until she found herself dethroning Becky Lynch to become Women's World champ. Her subsequent pairing with Dominik Mysterio and The Judgment Day has seen her go from strength to strength. But make no mistake: This Jersey girl's terrific comeback year has been all her own doing.

Proof that, sometimes, some time away can help a career rather than hinder it, Liv Morgan is now in a better position than she's ever been in WWE.

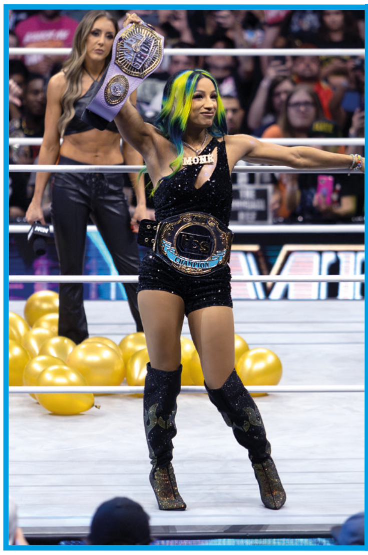


PHOTO BY JOHN SMOLEK

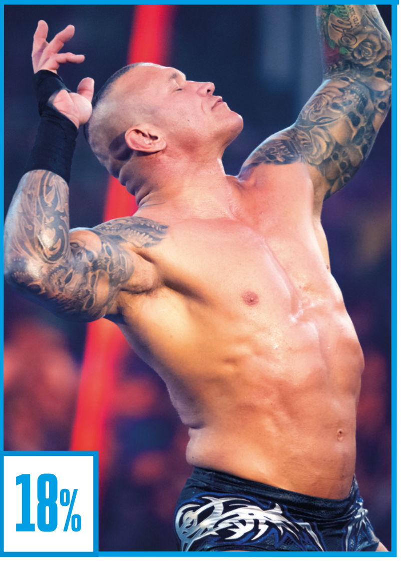
MERCEDES MONE

Depending on who you ask, opinions on Mercedes Mone range from labeling her a "superstar" to a "spoiled brat." Our opinion is that wrestling is better with her in it; and at least 19% of our voters agree. Signing with AEW solidified her status as one of the top women in the industry, and her in-ring return at Double or Nothing 2024 was met with thunderous applause. By the end of the night, Mone was TBS champion. Just a month later, she added the NJPW STRONG women's title belt to her haul. Becoming a dual champion? That's a pretty successful comeback.

19%

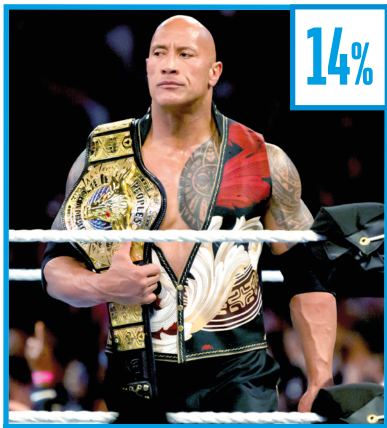
RANDY ORTON

It was a year of both excitement and concern for Randy Orton fans. After a devastating back injury, "The Viper" made a triumphant return at Survivor Series 2023, electrifying the crowd with his signature RKOs. Things were going well in 2024—including a great showing in the King of the Ring tournament—until Orton succumbed to another injury. While the lasting effects of the injury remain uncertain, our readers have let it be known that they enjoyed Orton's comeback and hope he has another one in him. After narrowly missing out on the award plaque this time, maybe 2025 can be his year.



18%

PHOTO BY JORDAN WILLIAMS



14%

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

THE ROCK

Dwayne Johnson's 2024 WWE return had the wrestling world abuzz. His sights seemed set on Roman Reigns until, well ... plans changed. Instead, what we saw was an unexpected alliance with Reigns and an angry, entitled Rocky we had not seen in years. Calling himself "The Final Boss," The Rock injected an unpredictable excitement into WWE TV on the road to WrestleMania. His blistering promos were a reminder of what made him "The Great One" to begin with. On 'Mania weekend, The Rock main-evented night one and played a large role on night two. It was quite the return, and fans eagerly await his next appearance.

29% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Thunder Rosa, Mike Santana, Nigel McGuinness, Sheamus

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED
2024
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
★★★★★
LIV MORGAN
COMEBACK
OF THE YEAR
★★★★★
AS VOTED BY
THE READERS OF
ESTLING ILLUSTRATED
MAGAZINE
DOM

20%

LIV MORGAN

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COMEBACK OF THE YEAR

INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

IF EVER THERE were a poster-boy for self-belief, hard work, and the pursuit of one's dreams, then Mr. Rhodes would be it. His decision to leave WWE and venture into the wider wrestling sphere in 2016 was a bold gamble. He bet on himself, sacrificing stability and security for the chance to control his own destiny. In the process, he not only changed his own life, but the wrestling business as a whole. And yet, he had unfinished business in WWE.

Returning to the promotion in 2022 with a much higher profile than when he left, "The American Nightmare" set about doing what his late father never could—become WWE champion. The two-year hero's journey that Rhodes embarked on saw him endure crushing defeats and injury setbacks. But through it all, he continued to inspire. At WrestleMania this year, Rhodes got to "finish the story" and became WWE champion.

More than just a wrestler, Rhodes has become a symbol of hope and resilience. His 2024 serves as a reminder that with perseverance and dedication, one can overcome any obstacle—as long as we hold tight to our dreams. It seems that the son of "The American Dream" is inspiring others to go for theirs.

PHOTO BY BASIL MAHMUD

BRYAN DANIELSON

Danielson continued to inspire fans in 2024 with his incredible in-ring performances and unwavering passion for the art form. "The American Dragon" had a year to rival his 2014—when he last won this award. This time, he settles for top runner-up. Despite facing numerous injuries throughout his career, Danielson's bold resolve remained unmatched as he attempted to stave off father time and an ailing body. His matches elevated the standard for professional wrestlers and were often considered instant classics. If we have seen the last one, Danielson will remain an influence on the sport he loved.

22%

SAMI ZAYN

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

8%

Who doesn't love a good underdog story? And the story of Sami Zayn is one of the best ones. Breaking free from the abusive shackles of The Bloodline in 2023, Zayn navigated fractured friendships and personal doubt as he became one of the top wrestlers in WWE in 2024. At WrestleMania, he dethroned Gunther for the Intercontinental championship, ending the Austrian's epic 666-day reign. Many thought he couldn't do it, but he proved them wrong. And outside of the ring, the Montreal native stands firm in his beliefs—and often uses his platform to highlight political and social injustices occurring in the world.

PHOTO BY ALLIE McPHETRIDGE

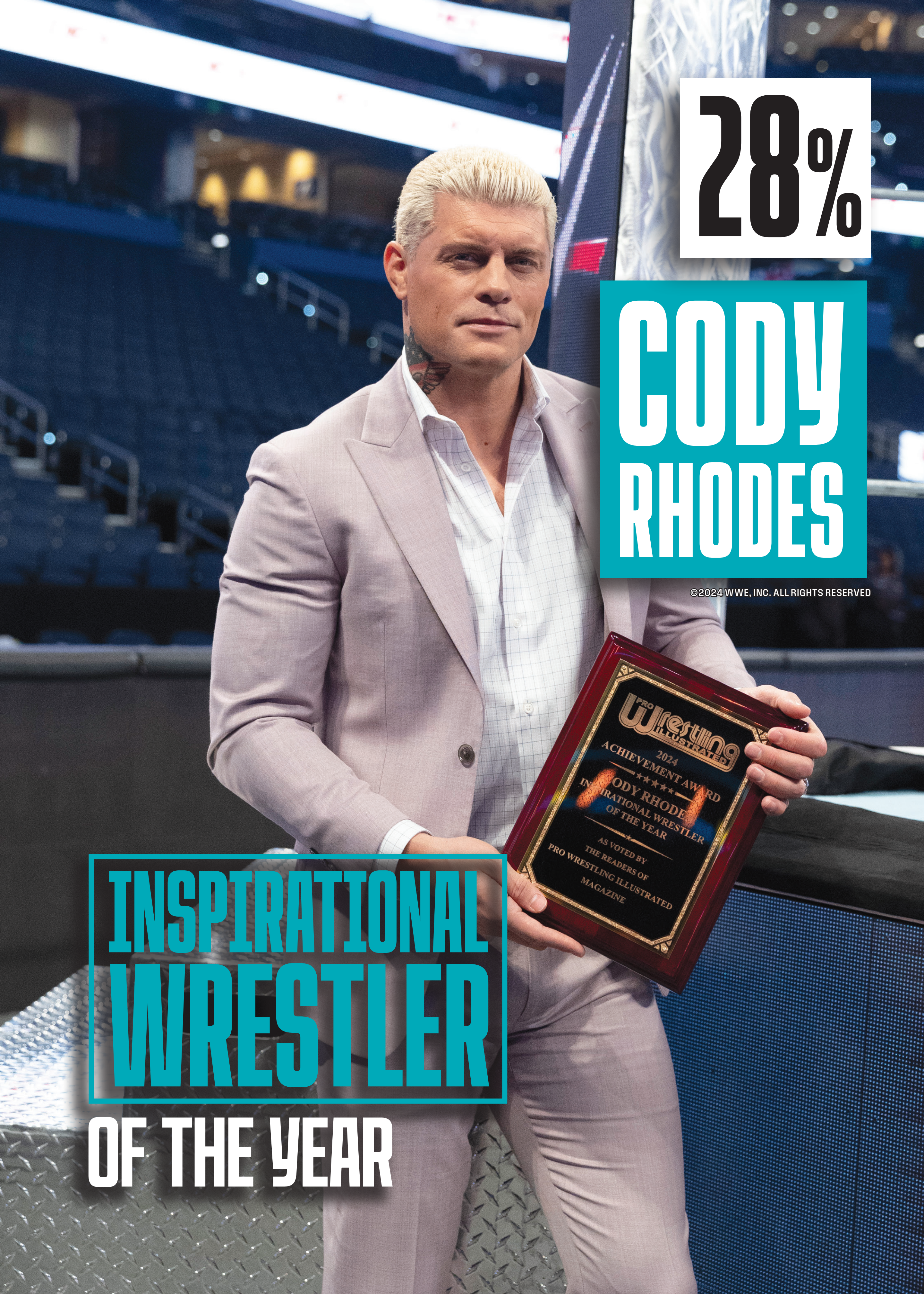
JEFF JARRETT

In 1988, Jeff Jarrett was voted our third runner-up for the Most Improved Wrestler of the Year award. How wild is it to think that, in 2024, "Double-J" is still improving himself and inspiring others? Despite facing personal challenges and professional setbacks throughout his life, Jarrett's resilience and determination have allowed him to overcome adversity and achieve remarkable staying power. With the ability to reinvent himself and adapt to the ever-evolving landscape of wrestling, Jarrett has been at the forefront of the business for decades now. As he continues to push the boundaries of what's possible, Jarrett remains a source of inspiration for aspiring young wrestlers and fans alike.

7%

35% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Otis, Mark Briscoe, Jessica Troy, Mike Santana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OF THE YEAR
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INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

CODY RHODES

28%

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MOST POPULAR WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

"THE AMERICAN NIGHTMARE'S" connection with fans is undeniable, and it goes beyond just having the surname "Rhodes." Cody's journey from being "Dusty's other son" to being the top star of the industry has allowed fans to witness his evolution firsthand. His relatability, coupled with his unwavering passion for wrestling, makes him a compelling figure for fans of all ages. Given all that, it's no surprise to see him walk away with this award for a second time (now only one shy of the number the ultra-popular Dusty won).

Whether it's his dedication to his craft or his willingness to go the extra mile for his fans, Rhodes carries himself with dignity and meaning. And observers can sense that. In many ways, he is a throwback to a bygone era of wrestling heroes that no longer exist. In AEW, which Rhodes helped create, there perhaps wasn't a place for that type of hero.

How vindicating it must be that his genuine personality and humility have contributed to his popularity in WWE. While his vulnerability could be scoffed at in an often cruel and cynical business, Cody Rhodes has leveraged it to become the most popular wrestler of 2024.

JEY USO

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

Once upon a time, casual fans might not have been able to tell Jey Uso apart from his twin brother, Jimmy. Today, everyone knows exactly who Jey is. He has become so popular that one in every six reader votes in this category went to him. Breaking away from the toxic family relationships in The Bloodline, Jey has proven himself a formidable singles competitor. Throughout 2024, he was able to showcase his versatility and depth as a character—creating legions of fans in the process. Through it all, he remained unwaveringly loyal to those who supported him, and willingly sacrificed for the greater good. *Yeet!*

17%

JOE HENDRY

Say his name and ... fans will vote! For him as one of the most popular wrestlers of the year, at least. 2024 was truly a breakout year for Hendry. His charisma and self-promotion propelled him to internet stardom, with his catchphrase "I Believe in Joe Hendry" becoming a viral sensation. His music videos, often parodying popular songs, have garnered millions of views and showcased his comedic talent. In the ring, Hendry's entertaining style endeared him to fans, and his success in TNA and NXT further solidified his status as a rising star. He even bagged a *PWI* cover story.

PHOTO COURTESY TNA WRESTLING

8%

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

5%

RHEA RIPLEY

When you're as confident and as physically imposing as "The Eradicator" is, it would be easy for people to find reasons not to like you. Credit, then, to the talented Ms. Ripley, who has fans flocking to support her in everything she does. 2024 showed a different side to "The Nightmare." Whether it was dealing with injuries, being betrayed by Dominik Mysterio, or losing her place in The Judgment Day, Rhea Ripley let fans in on a whole new emotional level. Her vulnerability only served to make her more popular. Perhaps, in 2025, she will place even higher in this category.

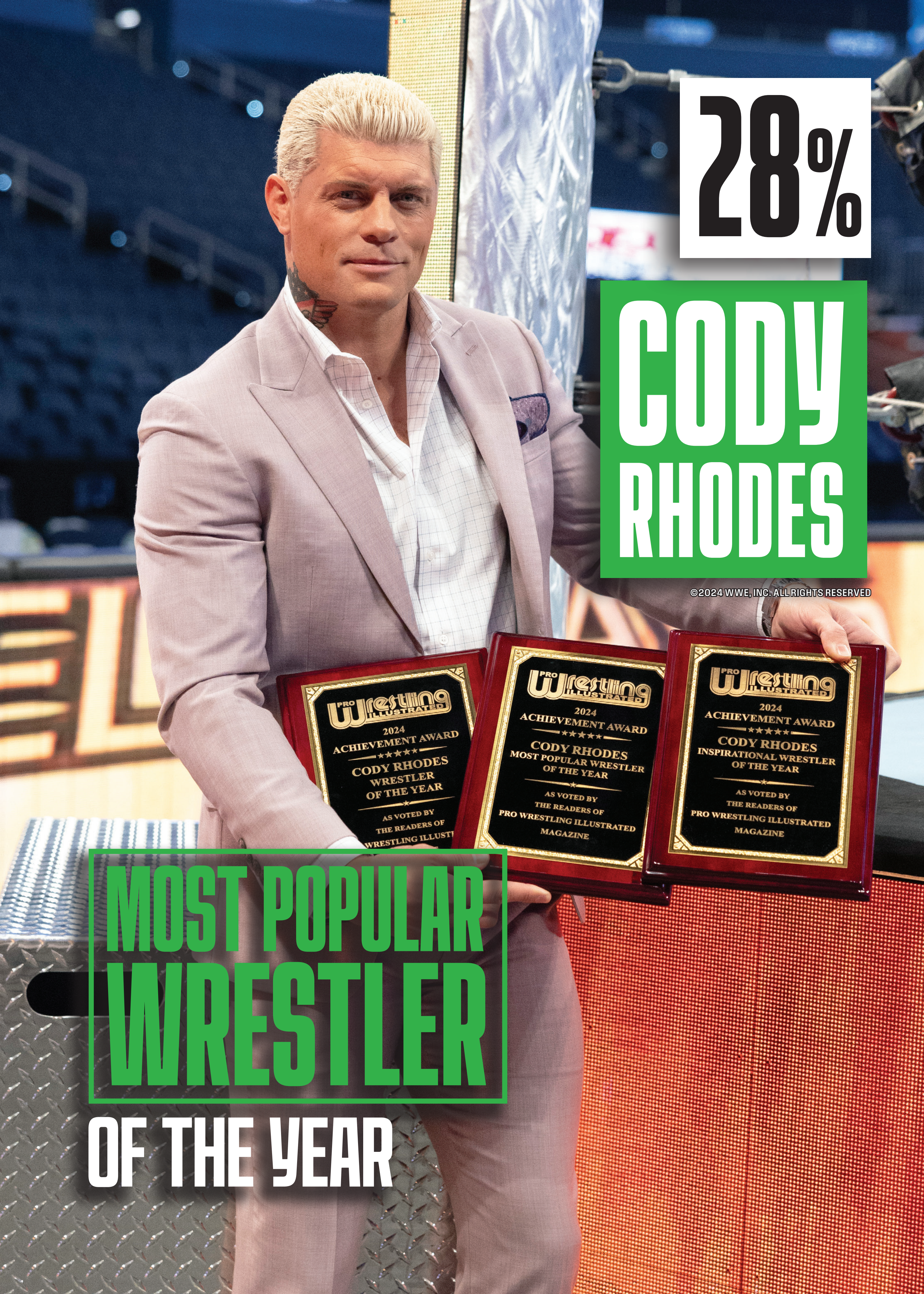
42% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Roman Reigns, LA Knight, Bryan Danielson, Mark Briscoe

MOST POPULAR WRESTLER
OF THE YEAR

28%

CODY RHODES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ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
CODY RHODES
WRESTLER OF THE YEAR
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MOST POPULAR WRESTLER OF THE YEAR
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INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER OF THE YEAR
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MOST HATED WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

JUST WHEN YOU thought that Dominik Mysterio couldn't be any more despised, he started making out with Liv Morgan on worldwide television. And so, last year's Most Hated Wrestler repeats this "honor" in 2024. After turning on his father, Rey, the younger Mysterio transformed from a promising young talent to a villainous character audiences loved to hate. Since then, his arrogance, disrespect for wrestling legends, and association with The Judgment Day have solidified his status as a top bad guy. Add to that his smug demeanor and constant trash-talking, and ... yeah, you get the picture.

The contrast between Mysterio's privileged upbringing and his current actions creates a sense of schadenfreude, giving fans pure delight when they see "Dirty Dom" get his comeuppance. Although his in-ring skills are better than he gets credit for, Mysterio's ability to evoke strong negative reactions from the crowd is his true gift. His association with Liv Morgan has only served to make those reactions louder.

We have said many times in the past that Dominik Mysterio reminds us of a young Eddie Guerrero more than a young Rey Mysterio. Even when he was a top villain, though, Eddie was never quite this detestable.

Good job, Dom. We guess.

PHOTO BY JORDAN WILLIAMS

SOLO SIKOA

Whoever said that blood is thicker than water wasn't watching the actions of Mr. Sikoa. In 2024, the quiet man of The Bloodline forced himself into a seat at the head of the table; and, in that process, made enemies of nearly his entire family. The opportunistic grappler brutally targeted anyone on the WWE roster who stood in his way. But it was the arrogance and disregard for others that really made him repugnant. Sikoa even went so far as to put trusted confidant (and non-wrestler) Paul Heyman through a table. While few have ever questioned Sikoa's in-ring feracity, they certainly have his likeability.

10%

MJF

A continual contender for this award, MJF remains one of the most hated wrestlers in the industry. The Long Island loudmouth's ability to elicit jeers from fans is as evergreen as his tan. MJF excels at playing a despicable jerk, consistently crossing lines and pushing boundaries. His greed, narcissism, and lack of respect for almost anyone make him incredibly irritating. (Seriously, we're getting angry just typing this.) Last year, we thought MJF had turned over a new leaf. Alas, in 2024, he was right back to his old ways. It seems a leopard can't change his Burberry stripes.

PHOTO BY BASIL MAHMUD

7%

PHOTO BY JORDAN WILLIAMS

LOGAN PAUL

Logan Paul's transition from social media influencer to professional wrestler has been done the same way everything else in his life has: with pure cockiness. While many fans applaud his athleticism, there are many more who find his flaunting of wealth—and perceived lack of wrestling experience—grating. Paul's high-profile matches, often against established wrestlers, have been criticized for overshadowing full-time talent. To that point, his nine-month U.S. title reign saw him defend the championship all of two times before losing it. Despite his willingness to take risks, the man's brash attitude and controversial past continue to make him a divisive figure in the wrestling world.

6%

33% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Jack Perry, Chris Jericho, Liv Morgan, Drew McIntyre

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED
2024
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
★★★★★
DOMINIK MYSTERIO
MOST HATED WRESTLER
OF THE YEAR
AS VOTED BY
THE READERS OF
PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED
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44%

DOMINIK MYSTERIO

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MOST HATED WRESTLER

OF THE YEAR

FEUD OF THE YEAR

THE FEUD BETWEEN Drew McIntyre and CM Punk was a masterclass in professional wrestling storytelling. Both wrestlers brought their A-games to the table, delivering hard-hitting promos that blurred the lines between fiction and reality. It's little wonder that this was the runaway winner in our Feud of the Year voting.

The chemistry between the Chicagoan and the Scot was undeniable, and, more often than not, it was obvious they had a deep dislike for one another. That translated into electrifying performances in the ring and on the microphone. McIntyre, feeling he was being screwed by everyone in his vicinity, channeled his inner 1997 Bret Hart to glorious effect—and took it all out on Punk. For his part, Punk was a tremendous foil who was just trying to get along without drama until goaded into situations he couldn't—and wouldn't—back down from.

The feud culminated in a series of epic encounters, each one surpassing the last in terms of intensity and drama until their Hell in a Cell showdown at Bad Blood.

McIntyre and Punk's rivalry helped revitalize WWE programming, the Drew McIntyre character, and the career of CM Punk. It reminded us all of the power of compelling storytelling and the enduring appeal of professional wrestling grudges.

ADAM PAGE VS. SWERVE STRICKLAND

©ALL ELITE WRESTLING

The feud between Adam Page and Swerve Strickland stands as one of the most intense and personal rivalries in AEW history. It began in 2023 with Strickland invading Page's home ... and only got more personal in 2024. The tit-for-tat grudge reached a boiling point when Page burned down Strickland's childhood home on *Dynamite*—leading to a highly anticipated Unsanctioned Lights Out steel cage match at All Out. This relationship has been characterized by its extreme violence and personal attacks seldom seen anywhere else in mainstream wrestling. And while some have questioned the necessity of those extremes, no one can question the intensity.

17%

LIV MORGAN VS. RHEA RIPLEY

Remember that total jerk in high school who had—for some reason—two relatively sane people fighting for their affection? Well, in WWE, that jerk is Dominik Mysterio. And in 2024, he had Liv Morgan and Rhea Ripley fighting over him. Yeah, we don't get it either. It wasn't all about Dom, however. A feud that started through jealousy and betrayal eventually became about who the most dominant woman on *Raw* was (and who got to hold the Women's World championship). Morgan and Ripley have engaged in brutal matches, including a high-stakes WarGames encounter, but this feud is far from settled.

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16%

MARIAH MAY VS. TONI STORM

©ALL ELITE WRESTLING

9%

In 2024, AEW answered that age-old Hollywood question: What if Anne Baxter had bludgeoned Bette Davis with a shoe in *All About Eve*? Okay, maybe no one asked that question. But AEW viewers were treated to a version of the answer when Mariah May betrayed Toni Storm after winning the Owen Hart Foundation Tournament. Their mentor-protege relationship gave way to intense confrontations and personal attacks, highlighting the complexities of their fractured bond. At All In, May dethroned Storm to become AEW Women's World champion. In doing so, she firmly usurped her place in the spotlight. Storm should've watched out for the shoe.

22% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Cody Rhodes vs. The Bloodline, NXT vs. TNA, The Bloodline vs. The Bloodline, EFFY vs. Mance Warner

36%

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CM PUNK VS. DREW MCINTYRE

FEUD OF THE YEAR

INDIE WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

MUSTAFA ALI'S 2024 has been a masterclass in reinvention. After leaving WWE, he seamlessly transitioned to the independent scene, captivating audiences with his unparalleled athleticism. However, he really shone in the care and attention to detail he put into his presentation. From his meticulously crafted entrance to his promo work, everything about Ali suggested this was a performer who had been bursting at the seams for some time. His smarmy politician act drew fans into his matches and helped set him apart from his peers. While no one doubted his in-ring abilities, Ali has proven to be a versatile all-around performer, perhaps making some people in Stamford, Connecticut, wonder what they let get away.

Taking his act around the globe, the former WWE cruiserweight champion carried himself like a star. So much was this the case that he found himself on the cover of the June 2024 issue of *PWI*—still a rarity for an independent wrestler. An impressive reign as TNA X division champion was just one of many accolades that Mustafa Ali boasted throughout the year. Perhaps the biggest, though, is the sheer number of votes he received here. With 39% of fans bidding in his favor, we can safely make one assumption about the readers of *PWI*—in Ali they trust.

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MATT CARDONA

Eclipsed only by another wrestler who featured on the cover of our magazine, Cardona would otherwise have taken this award for a third straight year. Yet 20% of our reader votes is nothing to be sniffed at. The one who calls himself the "Indy God" continued to be one of the top wrestlers in the world not under contract. (Although, if we're nitpicking, it really should be "Indie God," Matt.) Despite missing time due to an injury, Cardona still racked up wins and collected championships from coast to coast ... and around the world. If he's still a free agent a year from now, don't be surprised to see his name back atop the voting pile.

20%

MANCE WARNER

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

The once-beloved grappler turned to the dark side and had a banner 2024 as a result. Eschewing most other bookings in favor of climbing the GCW mountain, ol' Mancer turned the promotion into his own personal playground. When he dethroned Joey Janela for the GCW championship in June, Warner took possession of a title belt that he had yet to relinquish as of press time. Along the way, he defeated Jordan Oliver, Frankie Kazarian, Homicide, and Kylie Rae, to name just a handful. With that kind of success, and 8% of votes here, it's hard to say Warner isn't a star on the rise.

8%

PHOTO COURTESY TNA WRESTLING

ALLIE KATCH

After being the top runner-up in this category in 2022, it's a bridesmaid spot for Allie Katch again. But believe us: That's no slight. Katch remains one of the most fiercely independent wrestlers in the business and embodies the general spirit of what this award is all about. A split with her longtime BUSSY partner, EFFY, did little to slow Katch's roll. Away from her traditional stateside stomping grounds, she spent more time in the U.K., where she captured the TNT Extreme promotion's Women's championship. As long as she remains an indie wrestler, expect to see Katch garner reader votes in this category.

5%

28% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Darius Carter, Shazza McKenzie, Hyan, Krule

39%

MUSTAFA ALI

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED
2024
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
★★★★★
MUSTAFA ALI
INDIE WRESTLER
OF THE YEAR
AS VOTED BY
THE READERS OF
PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED
MAGAZINE
McLaren
McLaren CHICAGO

PHOTO BY BASIL MAHMUD

INDIE WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

MATCH OF THE YEAR

THE BEST WRESTLING matches are the ones that make us feel the most. The showdown between Cody Rhodes and Roman Reigns at WrestleMania 40 did just that. Now, our readers have voted it as *PWI's* Match of the Year 2024. This wasn't just a bout; it was the culmination of a years-long saga that arguably began when Rhodes returned to WWE in 2022. It was a redemption match for "The American Nightmare" and a laying down of the proverbial sword for Reigns as ruler of the kingdom.

From the opening bell, this was a rollercoaster of emotions, with Rhodes displaying unwavering determination and Reigns showcasing his dominance as "Tribal Chief." The Bloodline's relentless interference on behalf of the champion added an extra layer of chaos and unpredictability—as, too, did the surprise appearances of those aiding the challenger (Seth Rollins, John Cena, and The Undertaker). The audience was on the edge of its collective seat throughout.

In the end, it was Rhodes who emerged victorious, capturing the Undisputed WWE Universal championship and "finishing the story." As Samantha Irvin's voice cracked with emotion as she announced him the winner, it was nigh-impossible not to feel the love inside Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field.

CM PUNK VS. DREW MCINTYRE (10/5)

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After trading verbal barbs for almost a year—and PLE victories in the months prior—CM Punk and Drew McIntyre had their rubber match inside Hell in a Cell on October 5. It was the perfect blow-off to what had been a bitter and brutal blood feud. And if you wanted blood? You got lots of it in this one. Throughout the bout, we saw callbacks and payoffs aplenty. In the end, Punk walked out victorious. It was a good, gory grappling match between two guys who palpably hated each other. And sometimes, that's all you need.

9%

BRYAN DANIELSON VS. SWERVE STRICKLAND (8/25)

The Strickland vs. Danielson match at All In 2024 had everything. Whether you're a fan of technical wrestling, brawling, or high drama, the two Washington natives gave you it all. Many praised the hard-hitting action and emotional storytelling that both men delivered. Ultimately, Danielson submitted Strickland with a modified LeBell Lock to become the AEW World champion. It was a significant moment in his career. It must have been even sweeter to have it play out in front of his fans and family in a venue like Wembley Stadium. Strickland also deserves his flowers for his showstopping performance in defeat.

8%

©ALL ELITE WRESTLING

BRYAN DANIELSON VS. WILL OSPREAY (4/21)

©ALL ELITE WRESTLING

7%

Another Danielson match, another Match of the Year contender. It should come as no surprise, really ... especially when the opponent is Will Ospreay. The crowd was at a fever pitch from the get-go for this clash from AEW Dynasty. With chants of "fight forever" raining down, both men went at it without pause. Trading their signature moves and near-falls, the contest was a gritty, fast-paced, and hard-hitting war that lasted more than 30 minutes. By the end, both were exhausted, but the younger Ospreay had enough left in his tank to catch Danielson with a Hidden Blade to pick up the win.

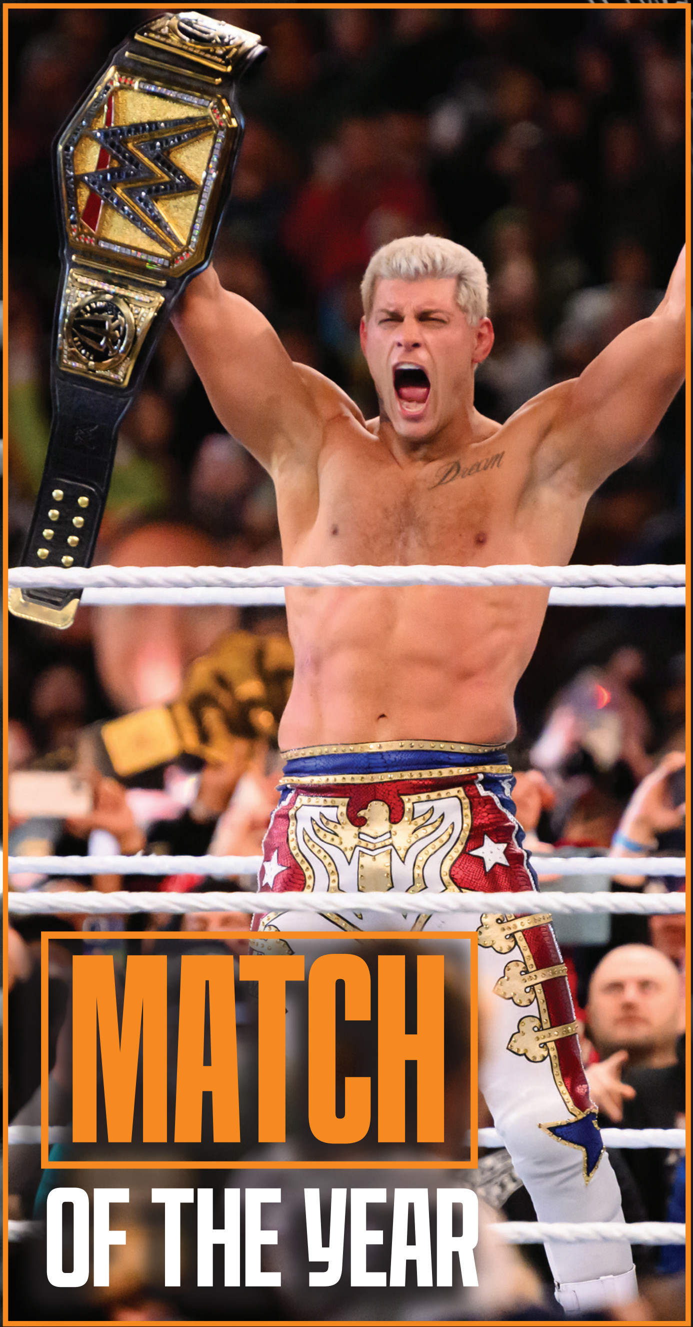
41% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters that did not capture a runner-up spot include: Bryan Danielson vs. Kazuchika Okada (1/4), Swerve Strickland vs. Will Ospreay (6/30), Kris Statlander vs. Willow Nightingale (9/7), Bayley vs. Iyo Sky (4/7)

35%

PHOTOS BY EARL GARDNER

ROMAN REIGNS VS. CODY RHODES (4/7)



MATCH OF THE YEAR

TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

WE'VE COME A long way since Dick The Bruiser and The Crusher were winning this award.

Hot on the heels of their being ranked #1 on our annual "Tag Team 100" list, *PWI* readers have selected Bianca Belair and Jade Cargill as the industry's top team of 2024. To put it bluntly, WWE might never have had a women's team possessing the combination of power, athleticism, and charisma that Belair and Cargill do. Indeed, their combined skills would be the envy of most teams in any promotion.

The duo's chemistry was undeniable, and they effortlessly complemented one another's strengths—just like a good tag team should. Their dynamic and unpredictable style kept opponents off guard and tag team gold around their waists.

Whether it was on *Raw*, *Smackdown*, or *NXT*, Belair and Cargill took the fight to any women who fancied their chances against the two powerhouses. The results were usually the same. The Unholy Union, Damage CTRL, and Fatal Influence are just a few of the combos to have fallen to the two-time WWE Women's tag team champions.

Although their status as a team for 2025 seems to be up in the air as we go to press, no duo had a better year in 2024.

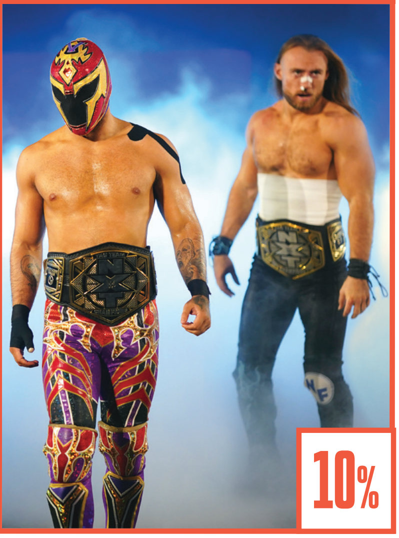
YOUNG BUCKS

©ALL ELITE WRESTLING

While people could (and often do) scoff at their lack of matches—and their outfits and facial hair—the fact remains that Matthew and Nicholas Jackson are still highly respected by our readers. Coming in as the top runners-up, The Young Bucks are still doing plenty to earn your hard-won votes. They began their year with a renewed focus, embracing their roles as EVPs and showcasing their leadership (and snotty attitudes) to much success. This included a third reign as AEW World tag team champions. The Jacksons even got to square off against Sting and Darby Allin in the Stinger's last match.

15%

FRAXIOM



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10%

Anglo-Spanish relations are better than ever thanks to this exciting duo, who were the bedrock of NXT's tag scene in 2024. Although both were promising singles wrestlers, Axiom and Nathan Frazer are proof of what can happen when the right people come together. Victories over Chase U, The D'Angelo Family, and MSK number among the impressive outings the high-flyers had. Outside of the ring, the European grapplers have a natural chemistry that's as fun as their in-ring one. Between Frazer's laid-back approach and Axiom's more uptight demeanor, their odd couple antics can lead to plenty of laughs.

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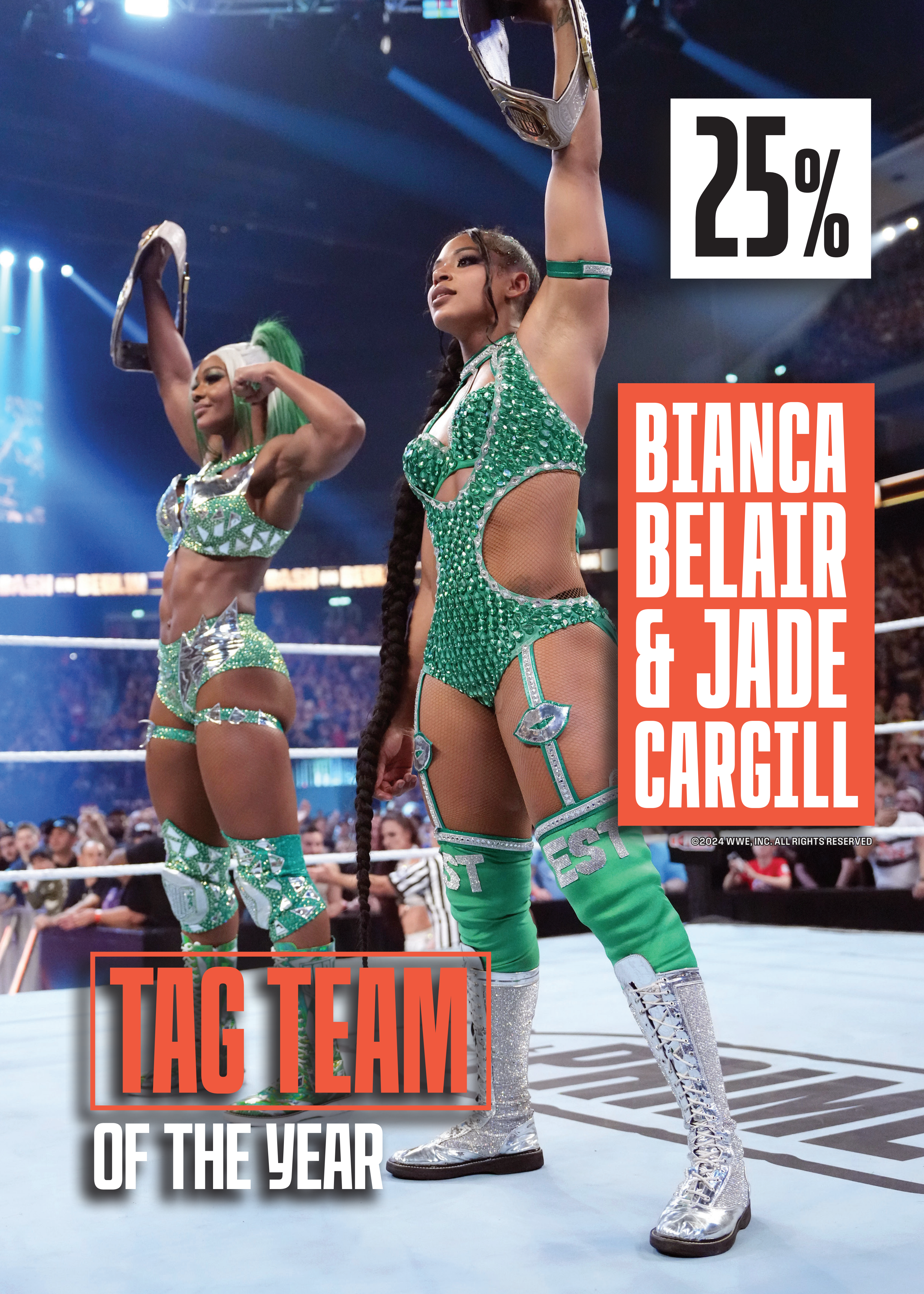
7%

THE JUDGMENT DAY

We know this is a tag team category, but special mention really should go to Finn Balor here. The Irishman has been the one constant that kept the Judgment Day name at the top of the WWE tandem ranks for much of 2024. Balor started the year as a tag team champion alongside Damian Priest and finished it as a tag team champion with JD McDonagh. Although faces may have changed, the standard set by The Judgment Day has not. Wins over Awesome Truth, The New Day, and The War Raiders are a few of the high points Balor and McDonagh tasted together.

43% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: FTR, The System, Unholy Union, DIY



TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

BIANCA BELAIR & JADE CARGILL

25%

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FACTION OF THE YEAR

GIVEN HOW THE Bloodline's 2024 started, we could just as easily be writing about them in the past tense. Instead, the group is picking up its second Faction of the Year award. But is it the same faction in name only?

The year did not start well for the Roman Reigns-led unit, and it arguably got worse from there. By mid-April, The Bloodline was in tatters. Sami Zayn and Jey Uso had broken away, Jimmy Uso was on the injured list, and "The Tribal Chief" had gone into hiding. The only Bloodline member left to fly the flag was Solo Sikoa. And fly it he did.

Sikoa became The Bloodline's de facto leader. Into the ranks came Tama Tonga, Tonga Loa, and Jacob Fatu. By summer, this "new" Bloodline had picked up where the "old Bloodline" had left off. No one on the WWE roster was safe as Sikoa and his gang set about conquering the proverbial mountain. Such was the dominance of The Bloodline that by the time Roman Reigns returned, not even he could wrest back control of the group.

2024 was a year of evolution for The Bloodline, but the group weathered the winds of change and remained a dominant force in WWE.

THE WYATT SICK6

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The task for The Wyatt Sick6 has not been easy. They were given the job of carrying on the legacy of a beloved performer who passed away much too soon. They then had to try and avoid the creative missteps that have, in the past, befallen such eccentric characters in WWE. That they received a solid 19% of reader votes for Faction of the Year is credit to their collective talent. Bo Dallas, Erick Rowan, Joe Gacy, Dexter Loomis, and Nikki Cross have reinvented themselves with grace, and the group stands as a fitting tribute to Bray Wyatt.

19%

THE JUDGMENT DAY

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It takes a special stable to withstand losing both Rhea Ripley and Damian Priest. The fact that The Judgment Day has managed to not only do this, but continue to thrive in the aftermath, is remarkable. With veteran leadership including Finn Balor and Carlito to help guide Dominik Mysterio, Liv Morgan, JD McDonagh, and Raquel Rodriguez, the crew in purple-and-black remains a threat to anyone in WWE. The group opened 2024 with championship gold in the clubhouse and ended it the same way. And that is all you need to know about The Judgment Day's year.

15%

BLACKPOOL COMBAT CLUB/DEATH RIDERS

©ALL ELITE WRESTLING

Change has been a common thread of all our top-voted factions this year, and The Death Riders are no different. Stepping out from the shadow of their former mentor (and his group name), the Jon Moxley-led crew reinvented itself as a more violent and sadistic beast. With Claudio Castagnoli, Wheeler YUTA, PAC, and Marina Shafir in rank, The Death Riders waged war on AEW. In the process, they won championships, seemingly retired Bryan Danielson, and generally made life miserable for everyone in their path. While their end goal isn't exactly clear yet, our readers are impressed ... and maybe a little concerned.

13%

24% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: The Elite, The Don Callis Family, The Patriarchy, The System

29%

THE BLOODLINE

PHOTOS ©2024 WWE, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

FACTION

OF THE YEAR

WOMAN OF THE YEAR

AS LAST YEAR'S top runner-up, she might have been a tad disappointed to play another "supporting role." This year, however, the people have spoken: The award for woman of the year goes to ... Toni Storm. And what a year she had.

The versatility of the two-time AEW Women's World champion is undeniable. Whether she's delivering crisp submissions, showcasing powerful strikes, or captivating the crowd with her charisma, she consistently delivers. Through her "Timeless" Toni persona, the colorful Aussie added more black-and-white to her life, and the reviews were exceptional. Her matches became not just physical contests, but genuine performances.

During her 2024 championship reign, Storm beat a who's who of AEW women, including Thunder Rosa, Saraya, and Deonna Purrazzo. It was her pairing with Mariah May, though, that really allowed her to shine—first as a mentor and then as a foe. The sight of May bloodying Storm's visage with "the shoe" remains an iconic wrestling image of 2024. And it marked another standout performance from the tameless one.

Beyond the ring, Storm's dedication to the craft was evident in her constant evolution. Unafraid to experiment with different hair, makeup, and clothing, she spent the year striving to push boundaries and entertain fans.

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

LIV MORGAN

2024 stands as a year of growth and reinvention for Ms. Morgan. After returning from injury, she showcased a more aggressive and determined side that led her to become WWE Women's World champion. The fun-loving and resilient spirit that made her a fan favorite was discarded in favor of a full-on embrace of the dark side. And an embrace of Dominik Mysterio. (*Yuck!*) Behind the bad girl behavior is a talented woman who has worked hard to improve her skill set. Morgan has been given a bigger role on WWE TV and handled it swimmingly. She is a worthy runner-up for this award.

14%

RHEA RIPLEY

Her epic reign as WWE Women's World champion might have come to a premature end, but even that couldn't diminish the year Ripley had. Injuries notwithstanding, it would have been a tall order to expect the 2023 Woman of the Year to take home the honors again. Still, even with time on the shelf, "The Eradicator" made a bloody good attempt. While her 2024 was marked by periods of inactivity, it was also marked by captivating feuds—notably, with Liv Morgan and Dominik Mysterio. It was also the year that "Mami" didn't need a long title reign to assert her dominance over WWE.

13%

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

PHOTO BY OCTOPUS STRETCH

11%

JORDYNNE GRACE

Anyone familiar with her needs no lecture on the achievements of Jordynne Grace. Yet, when all is said and done, 2024 might be looked at as the year "The Juggernaut" broke out. With high-profile appearances in NXT—and a dominant reign as TNA Knockouts champion—Grace made sure that countless more folks knew her name by the time the year was out. Rumors of a full-time move to NXT should come as no surprise. Her impact (pun intended) on the NXT Women's division was undeniable in her few appearances there. She also beat just about everyone TNA put in front of her.

37% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner-up spot include: Roxanne Perez, Mercedes Mone, Willow Nightingale, Athena

25%

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED
2024
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
TONI STORM
WOMAN
OF THE YEAR
AS VOTED BY
THE READERS OF
PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED
MAGAZINE

TONI STORM

WOMAN OF THE YEAR

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WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

WE ALL KNOW that wrestling can be highly subjective. What (or whom) one person likes may not be someone else's cup of tea. But with a whopping 42% of the votes, it seems our readers had little trouble in declaring Cody Rhodes to be the 2024 Wrestler of the Year.

Royal Rumble winner. WWE champion. The one who finally toppled Roman Reigns. Any of these by themselves would have been enough to warrant consideration in this category, but to do them all was a special feat. And even that constituted just a portion of the year "The American Nightmare" had.

Indeed, it was the manner in which Rhodes conducted his business that likely made him the runaway winner in a talented field. Shunning the partial schedule that some former WWE champions (deservedly) enjoyed, Rhodes flung himself head-first into being a touring champion. In the process, he became the "quarterback" of the promotion—a position he had coveted for some time.

In a year of firsts, Rhodes was able to call himself WWE champion, #1 on the "*PWI* 500," and now, the 2024 Wrestler of the Year. Not bad for the son of the son of a plumber.

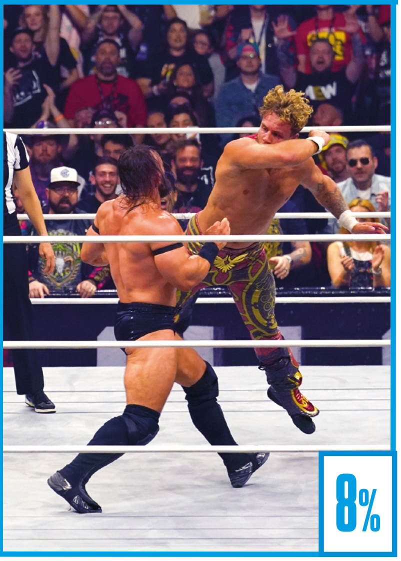
PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

GUNTHER

2024 has been a banner year for Gunther. He shattered records with the longest Intercontinental championship reign in WWE history, became the King of the Ring, and generally dominated within the squared circle. The highlight of his year came at SummerSlam, where he captured the World heavyweight championship and moved firmly into the upper echelon of WWE. There is a timeless quality to Gunther that makes you think he could have been a success in any era. And he probably would have. His career is a testament to hard work and remaining true to oneself. It seems our readers appreciated that enough to make him our top runner-up.

11%

WILL OSPREAY



8%

PHOTO BY BASIL MAHMUD

2024 stands as a whirlwind year for Ospreay. After a highly anticipated move to AEW, he immediately made his mark with a thrilling match against Konosuke Takeshita at Revolution. Ospreay's explosive style, intense rivalries, and English eccentricities have captivated fans. He had Match of the Year candidates in NJPW, TNA, RevPro, and AEW—where he also became a two-time International champion. There's a case to be made that Ospreay may be the best bell-to-bell wrestler in the world. And, with a respectable 8% of votes, many of our readers think he's the overall Wrestler of the Year.

PHOTO BY BASIL MAHMUD

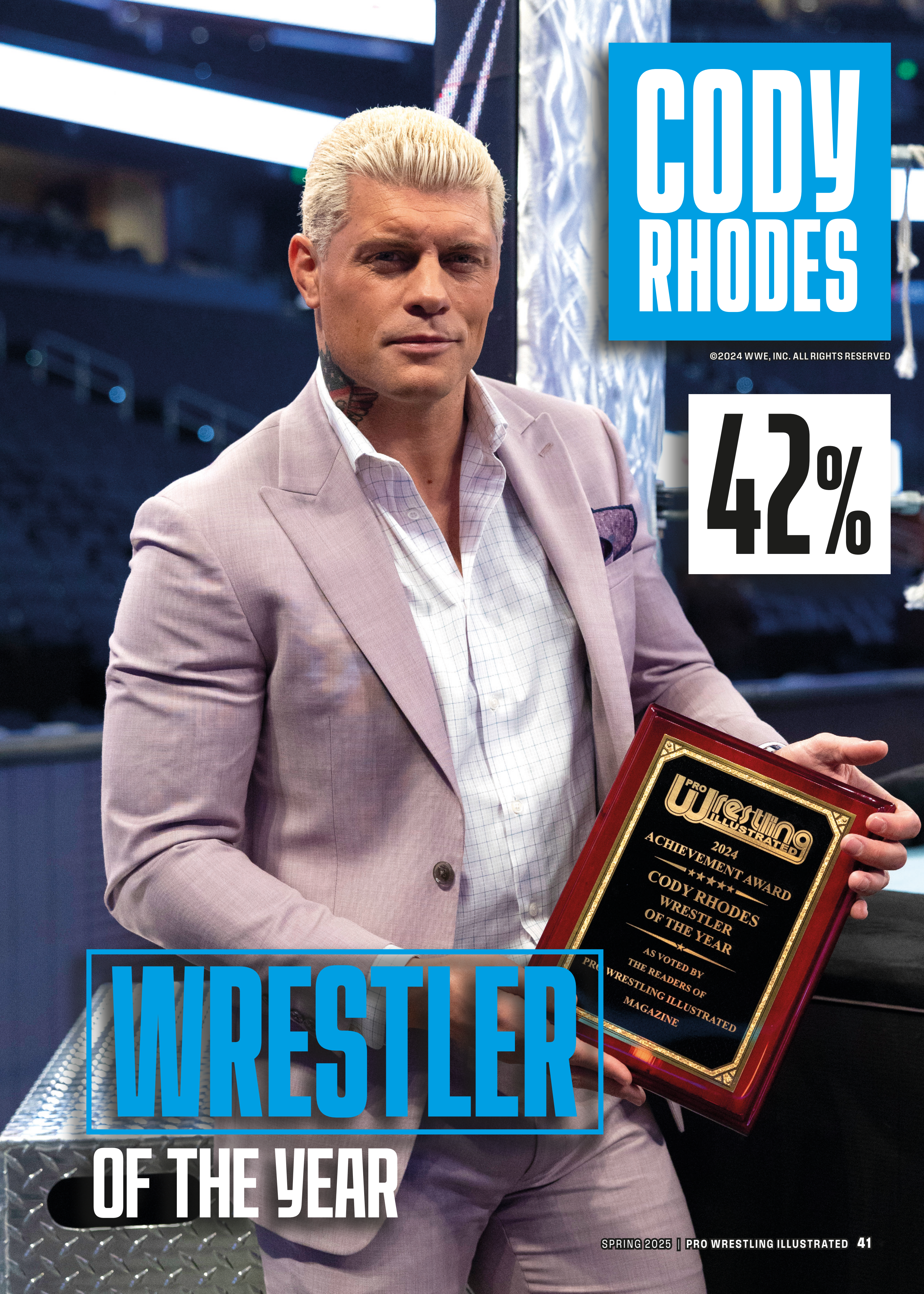
7%

BRYAN DANIELSON

It was a year of highs and lows for Bryan Danielson. He captured the AEW World championship at All In, in front of a massive crowd at Wembley Stadium. He was also forced to retire after losing that championship less than two months later. His final match at WrestleDream against Jon Moxley was a bittersweet ending to an illustrious career. While we hope that it wasn't the last time we see "The American Dragon" wrestle, if it was, he will remain a beloved figure in the wrestling world. Proof of that is his positioning here. Thank you, Bryan.

32% VOTES FOR OTHERS

Some of the top vote-getters who did not capture a runner up spot include: Swerve Strickland, Jordynne Grace, Damian Priest, Jon Moxley, Roman Reigns


PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED
2024
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
★★★★★
CODY RHODES
WRESTLER
OF THE YEAR
★
AS VOTED BY
THE READERS OF
PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED
MAGAZINE

CODY RHODES

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42%

WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

BOOKER T

Wrestling Illustrated
2024
STANLEY WESTON
AWARD
★★★★★
BOOKER T
FOR
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
AS SELECTED BY
THE EDITORS OF
PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED
MAGAZINE

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THE STANLEY WESTON Award for Lifetime Achievement is *Pro Wrestling Illustrated's* highest honor, and this year's list of recipients is headed up by none other than the five-time (five-time, five-time, five-time, five-time) WCW World heavyweight champion, Booker T. Now, can you dig that?

Catchphrases aside, Booker is one of the most highly decorated wrestlers of his generation. Having held the WWE World heavyweight championship, numerous tag team titles (including with brother Stevie Ray as Harlem Heat), and memberships in multiple wrestling halls of fame, the current NXT commentator was a shoe-in for the Stanley Weston Award at some juncture in his career.

After training under Ivan Putski and Scott Casey, Booker T made his wrestling debut in 1990 at the age of 25. He and Stevie Ray commanded attention as they won the Global Wrestling Federation tag team championship, then, a year later, signed with World Championship Wrestling at the urging of Sid Vicious. Harlem Heat became arguably the most dominant duo in WCW history, achieving a record 10 reigns as World tag team champions. This paved the way for Booker to thrive as a singles star in the late-1990s. He managed a combined 10 reigns with the Television and World heavyweight titles before the company was purchased by Vince McMahon.

In WWE, Booker quickly stood out as a top star of the former WCW, feuding with The Rock (among others) while establishing himself as a mainstay of the WWE roster. In addition to his stint as World heavyweight champ, he collected the Intercontinental, U.S., and World tag team titles, and enjoyed a memorable run as "King Booker" after winning the 2006 King of the Ring crown.

This year, it seems especially fitting for the proud Texan to be given our Lifetime Achievement Award, as his influence on the younger generations of wrestlers looms particularly large. Booker's Reality of Wrestling school has been officially recognized by the WWE ID program as one of the finest wrestling academies on the planet. And his prized pupil (and ROW alum) Roxanne Perez has been dominant on Tuesday nights as NXT Women's champion. Plus, Booker T has been named as one of the talent mentors on the forthcoming A&E show, *WWE LFG* (*WWE Legends & Future Greats*).

Booker spoke about the importance of the latter program on his popular *Hall of Fame* podcast. "It's gonna let the fans come behind the curtain just a little bit and see not just what it's like behind the curtain, but how hard it is to be behind the curtain, how stressful it is to be behind the curtain, how competition drives you, or bends you, or sometimes breaks you," he said.

Booker T was driven and surely bent, but never broken. Widely respected by his peers, fans, and critics, he now joins the prestigious list of wrestlers to receive the Stanley Weston Award.

MICKIE JAMES

PHOTO BY SCOTT LESH

LIKE FELLOW HONOREE Booker T, Mickie James has been tapped to mentor up-and-coming talent on the forthcoming *WWE LFG* show. And there's no question that James was a solid pick to be in that role. Long considered one of the premier women's wrestlers in the world, the Virginia native has collected much wisdom over her 25-year career that she can share with the next generation of grapplers.

Debuting in August 1999 as Alexis Laree, James established herself as a wrestler and manager of note. She was an early participant in what would become the TNA Knockouts division—a proving ground where she would later become a five-time World champion. She also held the WWE Women's title on five occasions, in addition to a stint as WWE Divas champ. And along the way, she was one of the hardest-working and most entertaining wrestlers in any locker room she entered. Her hard-hitting matches have long been complemented by a feisty persona—one that has resonated with fans worldwide.

Following her emotional "Last Rodeo" storyline in 2022–2023, which ended in an injured James relinquishing the Knockouts World title, Ms. "Hardcore Country" focused more on her work away from the ring. In 2024, she took on a backstage role at Ohio Valley Wrestling—where she previously competed as a WWE developmental talent—to serve as Head of Female Talent.

"There is space to create some real awesome female-driven content from my side, with the division that they have there now, and with them wanting to expand upon that and maybe build that out more," James said on *Busted Open Radio*. "Maybe make a tag team tournament or tag team championship, so then it gives more opportunities for women on the show. I'm just really excited."

Earlier in 2024, James produced an all-women wrestling show (Oceania Pro Wrestling's H.E.R.) in Australia, where she faced former WWE rival Vix Crow (Alicia Fox). This, too, felt like a natural move for James. Three years prior, while working as a producer for the National Wrestling Alliance, she had overseen the influential "EmPowerrr" pay-per-view, which served as a robust, cross-promotional showcase for women's wrestling.

Despite a relative lack of ring activity in recent years—and unlike most Stanley Weston Award honorees—Mickie James isn't done as an active wrestler. Although she has been focusing more on motherhood and certain other projects (including *The Last Match* wrestling musical), James told WrestleZone's Ella Jay that she is definitely "not retired." That's great news for James' many fans, who have supported her during the many twists and turns of her career to date.

GAIL KIM

AS THE INAUGURAL TNA Knockouts World champion—and a six-time subsequent Knockouts champ—Gail Kim played a huge role in the evolution of North American women's wrestling. Her rivalry with Awesome Kong helped launch the Knockouts division, which became a massive ratings success and ultimately led to scores of new opportunities for women wrestlers all over the globe.

Kim, also a former WWE Women's champion, is a proud member of the TNA Wrestling Hall of Fame. An electrifying presence inside the ring, she influenced future generations of wrestlers in the same way she was inspired by the likes of Trish Stratus, Lita, Jazz, and Ivory. Ranking #1 in the 2012 "*PWI* Female 50" (now the "Women's 250"), she logged countless miles, bumps, and bruises before the wear-and-tear of grappling forced her to move into a backstage role.

With fans and wrestlers regularly clamoring for Gail Kim to make a return to the ring since her 2019 retirement, it is interesting to note that she and fellow Weston honoree Mickie James almost enjoyed a recent run in pursuit of the Knockouts World tag title. "Hey, I'm a little realistic when it comes to all this," she said. "I was just kind of producing and doing talent relations at the time, so I was like, *I think I can handle it.* But I do care about my legacy, to be honest. I do care about my body of work and what the fans remember. I don't want them to remember me slowing down or not having what I had in my prime. That's important to me."

Ultimately, Kim's growing backstage responsibilities derailed her planned return to the ring. But, while noting one should "never say never" in the wrestling business, the retired grappler says she's happy with things the way they are. "I care about the roster. I'm very protective of them. I want to be there for them," Kim told *PWI*. "And being a talent would probably take up a lot of my mindset and focus, and so I had to choose. There's a lot of girls out there. It's their time, not mine."

As a respected producer and ring veteran of nearly two decades, Gail Kim still has quite a bit to offer the industry—and she's appreciative of the opportunity. "Just super grateful that I've been able to ride this ride for so long," she said. "I want to continue doing it and still contribute in a great way, and make TNA as big as it can be in the future."

PHOTO COURTESY TNA WRESTLING

DAVE MELTZER

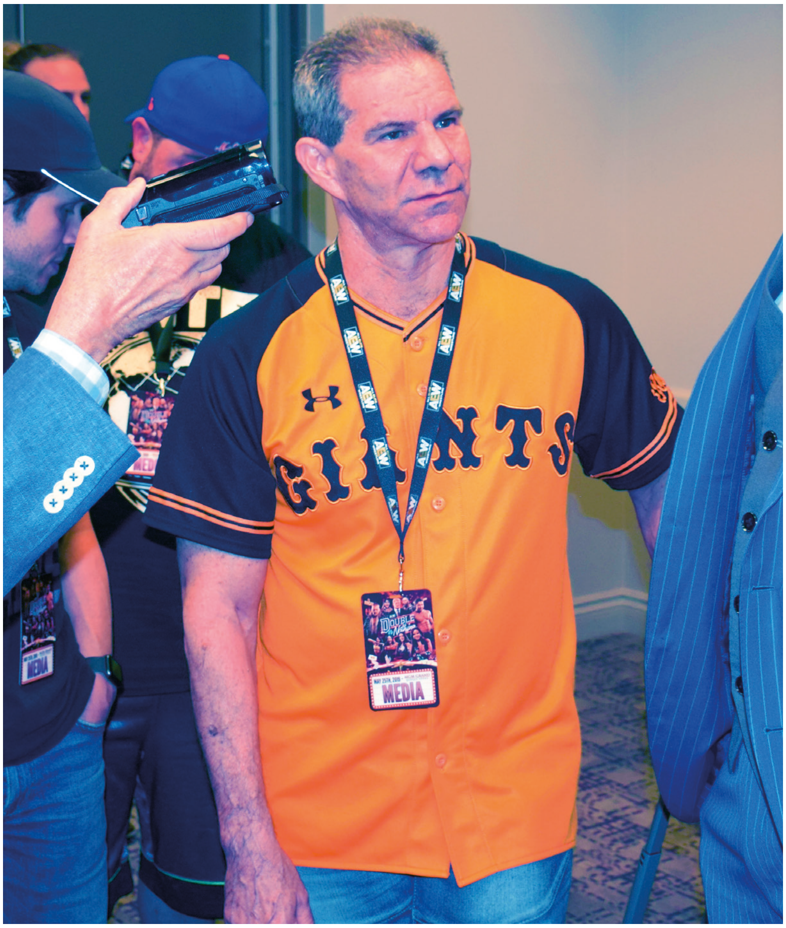

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

HALF A CENTURY into his career as a pro wrestling journalist, Dave Meltzer is the first reporter not affiliated directly with *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* to be given the Stanley Weston Award.

"I've obviously read *PWI* since it started," Meltzer reflects. "And even before that, I read the other publications, as a kid from 70, 71 on. *Inside Wrestling* ... so, this pretty neat in a lot of ways for me."

In an era when most wrestling media—including this magazine—reported on wrestling storylines as they were presented, Dave Meltzer took a more holistic view of the industry. He developed a reputation for reporting not just match results, but on behind-the-scenes aspects of the business. Yet, while his work proved controversial among some traditionalists, Meltzer maintained an amicable relationship with *PWI* staff.

"Bill Apter and Craig Peters, I talked to them all the time, I'm gonna say from the mid-to-late 80s on," he said. "I always had a good relationship with those guys. I understood what they were doing. They understood what I was doing."

And what Meltzer was doing was creating the most comprehensive weekly record in all of professional wrestling—*The Wrestling Observer Newsletter*—which has been a must-read for fans and insiders over the last 40 years.

One of Meltzer's biggest strengths as a reporter is his uncanny ability to analyze current news and industry trends through a historical lens. "There are a handful of guys that are really into old history and things like that—at a level that I don't have the time to be—and who have helped me greatly," began Meltzer. "Like Steve Yohe, he has just been incredible to me, as far as knowledge of that. But as far as the adaptation of the history to the modern world, which is what I use history for ... I'm very, very into the present, but I'm into learning from the history."

To some fans, Meltzer is best known for popularizing the star-rating system for matches. In truth, that is a small part of what he does—and comprises only a portion of any *Wrestling Observer* issue. More importantly, the California native dives deep into each week's news and events with great detail and expertise. His retrospectives of recently deceased wrestlers have become the industry standard. And his writings are supplemented by hours of audio reporting on *Wrestling Observer Radio*.

"Writing about wrestling, it's amazing," Meltzer told *PWI*. "There's things that you learn that, going in, *Oh, I'm just writing about wrestling,* that you would never, never think would happen. Whether it's understanding politics better, or understanding entertainment better, understanding sports better, it's a little bit of everything in wrestling.

"It's a fascinating subject. It's got unique fans. I mean, some of the greatest people in the world I've ever met, nicest people, smartest people, are pro wrestling fans. And there's also the opposite, you know, there's some of the meanest, most vile people at times, too. And you kind of learn there's a little bit of all that."

BEST SONGWRITER: **Joe Hendry**
→ Jennifer Heering, Bethel, CT

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NEVERENDING FAMILY DRAMA: **The Bloodline**
→ Justin Ballard, Boston, MA

BLOOD & GORE AWARD: **Swerve Strickland vs. "Hangman" Page at All Out**
→ Franky D

"THE FACTIONS ARE RUNNING THE ASYLUM" AWARD: **MLW**
→ Jon Weber, Voorhees, NJ

THANK YOU, F YOU, BYE BYE: **Vince McMahon**
→ Jimmy Nance, Myrtle Beach, SC

CROWD OF THE YEAR: **WWE Backlash, Lyon, France**
→ Matt Gehm, Centereach, NY

WHEN REVENGE AND SELLING OUT LOOK THE SAME: **CM Punk**
→ David Chamberlain, San Diego, CA

THE "FEUD I DIDN'T KNOW I WAS ASKING FOR" AWARD: **Andrade vs. Carmelo Hayes**
→ Jon Weber, Voorhees, NJ

BLOODY HELL (& WATCH OUT FOR THE SHOE) AWARD: **Mariah May's Vicious Turn on Toni Storm in Calgary, Alberta, Canada**
→ Dan Ball, Lockport, NY

THE RON SIMMONS MONOSYLLABIC AWARD: **Kazuchika Okada with "B–"**
→ Roger Renman, Vantaa, Finland

MOST TRICKS WHOOPED: **Trick Williams**
→ Justin Sell, East Greenville, PA

HATER OF THE YEAR: **Drew McIntyre**
→ Mary Miller, Lititz, PA

HEY LADIES, JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT YOUR NAME IS MISSPELLED: **Damage CTRL**
→ Chris Thomas, Atkins, VA

DUDE, EVEN EMINEM WOULD TELL YOU TO TONE IT DOWN: **Max Caster**
→ Justin Sheluga, Reading, PA

DREAM MATCH: **Jordynne Grace vs. Rhea Ripley**
→ Ronald Carrington, Austin, TX

FOREVER ACKNOWLEDGED: **The Wild Samoans**
→ Victoria Ramirez, St. Paul, MN

SICKEST WRESTLER OF THE YEAR: **Jon Moxley**
→ Julia E. Warner, Duncan, OK

WRESTLER'S MOST IMPORTANT GEAR: **The Microphone**
→ Francois Larocque, Gatineau, QC

THE "YOU AIN'T HIM" AWARD: **Solo Sikoa as "The Tribal Chief"**
→ Nicholas Garrett

PLE OF THE YEAR: **WrestleMania XL**
→ Brooks Stadler, Seven Hills, OH

BEST MUSTACHE SINCE MAGNUM T.A.: **Adam Page**
→ Tony Laplume, Tampa, FL

WORST MUSTACHE SINCE MAGNUM T.A.: **Dominik Mysterio**
→ Tony Laplume, Tampa, FL

BEST FEUD WHICH 15 YEARS LATER IS STILL AS BEAUTIFUL: **Nigel McGuinness vs Bryan Danielson**
→ Anthony Maronneau, Poitiers, France

TNA VS. NXT: **Now That's How You Do Cross-Promotion**
→ Sadiyq Witherspoon, Lansdowne, PA

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS: Mariah May

→ Alex Yelloweyes

PHOTO BY KEVIN McELVANEY

GET WELL SOON:
Charlotte Flair

→ Justin Sell, East Greenville, PA

CHANNEL CHANGER AWARD:
Chris Jericho

→ Thomas Gentry, Houston, TX

GLORIA GAYNOR'S I WILL SURVIVE AWARD: Rhea Ripley

→ Victoria Ramirez, St. Paul, MN

THE FORCE IS STRONG WITH THIS ONE: ROH 2-year Champion Athena Palmer

→ Sean Conner

WOE IS ME AWARD:
Drew McIntyre

→ Steven East, Jacksonville, IL

BEST PODCAST: *Busted Open*

→ Jennifer Heering, Bethel, CT

MORE PRESTIGIOUS THAN THE UNIVERSAL TITLE:
Ulafala

→ Darin Ciccaglione, Aldan, PA

BEST LUCHA WRESTLER:
Dragon Lee

→ Kevin Rogers, Springfield, MA

THE "I DON'T NEED A DOCTOR, I'LL FIX IT MYSELF" AWARD:
Rhea Ripley (Setting Her Own Shoulder in Place at SummerSlam)

→ Megan Ambers, New York, NY

UP AND COMING PROMOTION OF THE YEAR: DEADLOCK Pro Wrestling

→ Brandon Davis, Coalmont, IN

TOXIC ATTRACTION 2.0:
NXT's Fatal Influence

→ Alex Yelloweyes

FUNNIEST YOUTUBE CLIP:
Dominik Mysterio Being Booed at His Wedding

→ John Feeney, Woodbine, NJ

D-GENERATION X 3.0 AWARD:
The System

→ Corey Hospedales, Boston, MA

Tiffy Time
MONEY IN THE BANK

THE #1 ESCAPEE FROM BARBIE'S DREAM HOUSE: Tiffany Stratton

→ Jon Weber, Voorhees, NJ

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

EMOTIONAL MOMENT OF THE YEAR: Sting's Last Match

→ Quentin "Traff," Bordeaux, France

PHOTO BY ALLIE McPHETRIDGE

MOST CONTAGIOUS ENTHUSIASM: Thea Hail

→ Travis Nuckels, Lynchburg, VA

UNDERRATED WRESTLER OF 2024: Steve Maclin

→ Eric Kratzer, Ripley, OH

HOSTILE TAKEOVER: Solo Sikoa Makes The Bloodline His

→ Lia Fields, Westfield, NJ

KEEPING THE FLAME BURNING: Eddie Ellner for the Stanley Weston Award

→ Brent Ruttan, Toronto, ON

"SO GOOD SHE SHOULD BE ON AEW TV" AWARD: Athena

→ Kat Bourne, Savannah, GA

BEST GIMMICK: Toni Storm

→ Ned Leffingwell, Des Moines, IA

SAME OL' SAME OL' AWARD: WWE Programming

→ Cedrick Ramsey, Canton, IL

STRONGEST: Oba Femi

→ Nathan Walter, Gap, PA

OWNER OF ALL THE AURA: Stephanie Vaquer

→ Nicholas Garrett

PHOTO BY MIKEY NOLAN

WORST BEARDS: Sami Zayn + Bryan Danielson (tie)

→ Raymond Martin, Las Vegas, NV

THE TAG TEAM YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU NEEDED: The Outrunners

→ Warren Doescher, Pendleton, OR

PHOTO BY LEE SOUTH/©ALL ELITE WRESTLING

WORST RIC FLAIR IMPERSONATION AWARD: Aaron Dean Eisenberg in *The Iron Claw*

→ Jennifer Heering, Bethel, CT

BLINK AND YOU WILL MISS HIM: Hologram

→ Anthony Tollison, Hudson, FL

YOU SUCK, PART 2: Chad Gable

→ Liam "Ace" Hutchinson, South Windsor, CT

INTRO OF THE MILLENNIUM AWARD: Samantha Irvin Introducing Chelsea Green

→ Kat Bourne, Savannah, GA

DEAL OF THE YEAR: *WWE Raw* Moves to Netflix

→ Kenneth Pordon, Hackensack, NJ

BEST NON-HUMAN WRESTLER: Mecha Mummy

→ Liam James, Salford, U.K.

MOST STYLISH: Seth Rollins

→ Amy Shell, Omaha, NE

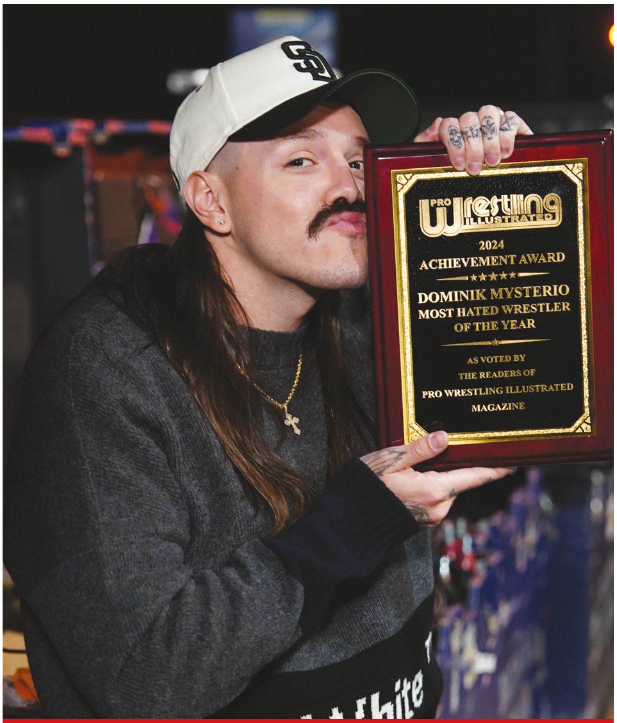
BLACKPOOL MURDER CLUB: Jon Moxley Puts a Plastic Bag Over Bryan Danielson's Head

→ Lia Fields, Westfield, NJ

TRICK OR TREATER OF THE YEAR:
The Beast Mortos

→ Josie Schmidt, Omaha, NE

PHOTO BY BASIL MAHMUD


PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED
2024
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
DOMINIK MYSTERIO
MOST HATED WRESTLER
OF THE YEAR
AS VOTED BY
THE READERS OF
PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED
MAGAZINE

LATINO HEAT:
Dominik Mysterio

→ Robert Coffey, South Gate, CA

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JAILBIRD OF THE YEAR:
Vince McMahon

→ Brandon Davis, Coalmont, IN

MAN, I SURE DO MISS THIS PPV: WCW Starrcade

→ Ronald Carrington, Austin, TX

BEST MAGAZINE:
Pro Wrestling Illustrated

→ Ned Leffingwell, Des Moines, IA

HOW MANY SECOND CHANCES?: CM Punk

→ Liam "Ace" Hutchinson, South Windsor, CT

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES:
Sting

→ Jimmy Nance, Myrtle Beach, SC

GREATEST STREAK IN WRESTLING SINCE UNDERTAKER GOING 20-0 AT WRESTLEMANIA: Sadiyq Witherspoon Getting His Name Published Four Years in a Row

→ Sadiyq Witherspoon, Lansdowne, PA

FEWER UNOFFICIAL OFFICIAL AWARDS PRINTED: Room for More Pictures of Giulia

→ Elia Barbati, Bound Brook, NJ

PHOTO BY MIKEY NOLAN

BEST ANNOUNCER: Samantha Irvin

→ Ned Leffingwell, Des Moines, IA

PHOTO BY JORDAN WILLIAMS

ROCK STAR OF *SMACKDOWN* AWARD: Alicia Taylor

→ Kat Bourne, Savannah, GA

EL GENERICO WOULD BE PROUD: Sami Zayn Defeats Gunther with a Brainbuster

→ Lia Fields, Westfield, NJ

BEST WHATNOT STREAM: Steph De Lander & Mance Warner

→ Jennifer Heering, Bethel, CT

BEST BROADCAST ANNOUNCE TEAM ON TELEVISION: Excalibur, Tony Schiavone and Taz (*AEW Dynamite*)

→ Neville Lowndes, Chesapeake, VA

THE MASTER AND RULER UP IN HEAVEN: Sid Vicious

→ Anthony Tollison, Hudson, FL

CHANGE THE CHANNEL TO *GOLDEN GIRLS* RERUNS HEAT: The Young Bucks

→ Russell Cartwright

***PWI* COLUMNIST OF THE YEAR: Harry Burkett**

→ Jimmy Nance, Myrtle Beach, SC

BANKING ON HERSELF: Mercedes Mone Signs Record Women's Deal with AEW

→ Alex Yelloweyes

AND THE GRAMMY GOES TO: Joe Hendry

→ Johnny Heering, Danbury, CT

WE'RE HERE!: The Wyatt Sick6

→ Liam "Ace" Hutchinson, South Windsor, CT

FUTURE WYATT FAMILY MEMBER AWARD: Wendy Choo

→ Brian Crawford, Marion, OH

MISSED SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY: Skye Blue on Bluesky

→ Bill Elvis Gottfried, Holtsville, NY

BEST CAREER (AND LEGACY) IN THE WORLD: Bryan Danielson

→ Sean Conner

ENOUGH BLOOD DRAWN TO DONATE TO A BLOODBANK: Jon Moxley

→ Neville Lowndes, Chesapeake, VA

BREAKOUT WRESTLER OF THE YEAR: Stephanie Vaquer

→ Kenneth Pordon, Hackensack, NJ

IS THIS THE SAME GUY WE LAMBASTED IN WWE?: Swerve Strickland

→ Justin Sheluga, Reading, PA

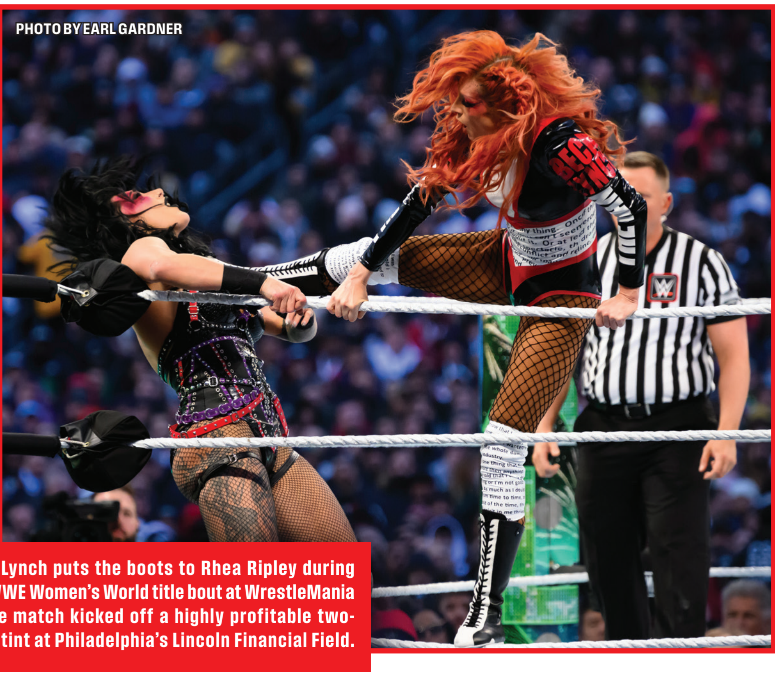
A LEGITIMATE CANDIDATE IN 2024 FOR INSPIRATIONAL, MOST IMPROVED, COMEBACK, MOST POPULAR WRESTLER, AND ONE-HALF OF TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR: R-Truth

→ Chris Awtrey, Irving, TX

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

WWE BREAKS REVENUE RECORDS AGAIN; EXPANDS GLOBAL BRAND

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER



Becky Lynch puts the boots to Rhea Ripley during their WWE Women's World title bout at WrestleMania 40. The match kicked off a highly profitable two-night stint at Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field.

SIMPLY PUT: WWE is more profitable than ever. The amazing fact is we've used a variation of that line in every "Year In Review" over the past half-decade.

WWE's first quarter of 2024, for example, boasted revenue of $316.7-million, a six-percent increase over 2023. WWE edged out its sister TKO brand, the UFC, which reported $313-million during the same period.

WWE revenue rose to $456.8-million for the second quarter, thanks in part to WrestleMania 40, and remained steady at $326.3-million for the third quarter. Live-event ticket sales, which included WrestleMania 40, were $144.1-million during the second quarter, compared to $62-million for the same quarter in 2023—an impressive 132-percent increase!

The most visible sign of WWE's ever-growing global imprint was the number of premium live events held outside North America, including Elimination Chamber in Perth, Australia; Backlash in Lyon, France; King & Queen of the Ring and Crown Jewel in Saudi Arabia; Clash at the Castle in Glasgow, Scotland; and Germany's Bash in Berlin. Regional house shows often accompanied these events, typically with enthusiastic crowds and high attendance, helping off-set the expenses associated with overseas streaming productions.

Several major events were too big for the usual arena confines, as stadium shows became even more of a staple in 2024. Those included Elimination Chamber: Perth at Optus Stadium (52,590), WrestleMania 40 at Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field (120,239 for Nights 1 and 2 combined), and SummerSlam at Cleveland Browns Stadium (57,791).

As with WrestleMania, SummerSlam 2025 at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey and SummerSlam 2026 in Minneapolis will be two-night affairs.

And WWE made tremendous television agreements in 2024. After spending most of its three-decade existence on USA Network, *Raw* was set to move to Netflix in January 2025. Netflix will pay $500-million per year over the next decade, which values the deal at $5-billion—five times higher than *Smackdown's* historic deal with Fox in 2019. Moving to a streaming service would increase *Raw's* number of households around the world.

WWE and Fox parted ways, with *Smackdown* returning to USA Network on Friday nights in a five-year, $1.4-billion deal with NBC Universal. *Smackdown's* overall ratings number shrunk to 1.7 million for its USA return on September 13, a drop of about 500,000 viewers. Considering that big-money contract, WWE execs hardly considered it a loss.

NXT's move to The CW was a complete success, with the developmental brand scoring higher numbers on The CW than USA. Randy Orton's appearance on the October 1 premiere drew 895,000 viewers. Taking NXT on the road to mid-sized venues, such as The Factory in Orton's hometown of St. Louis and the 2300 Arena in Philadelphia, improved the look and feel of the show. Furthermore, *NXT's* ratings on Tuesday nights were higher than those of *AEW Dynamite* on Wednesday nights.

WWE also revived *Saturday Night's Main Event* as a series of quarterly specials for NBC. The first aired December 14 from Long Island's Nassau Coliseum, site of the first *SNME* in 1985. Top bouts included Undisputed champion Cody Rhodes vs. Kevin Owens and World champion Gunther defending against Finn Balor and Damian Priest in a three-way.

AEW STRIKES HISTORIC TV DEAL AMID CHALLENGES

PHOTO BY JOHN SMOLEK

Will Ospreay and Daniel Garcia face off in a pay-per-view-caliber match on *AEW Dynamite*. Although All Elite Wrestling has no problem attracting world-class talent—and is now wildly profitable, thanks to its new TV deal—the company's TV ratings and live attendance are both down.

THROUGHOUT 2024, AEW President Tony Khan and his team negotiated with Warner Bros. Discovery to renew All Elite Wrestling's programming on TBS and TNT and extend it to another WBD property, MAX. They were highly successful. The resulting deal was reportedly worth at least $185-million per year through 2027, with the option of an additional year. With this deal, AEW became the second-most profitable wrestling company ever.

"We are thrilled to strike this expanded agreement to deliver amazing new AEW content and stories to TNT and TBS, as well as bring the thrilling live action to MAX for the first time," said Kathleen Finch, chairman and CEO of U.S. Networks, WBD.

Dynamite and *Collision*—remaining on TBS and TNT, respectively—were also set to live-stream on MAX in January 2025, the same month as *WWE Raw's* premiere on Netflix. AEW PPVs would be offered at a discount for MAX subscribers later in the year.

During 2024, *Dynamite* was consistently cable's top program among 18- to 49-year-olds on Wednesday nights, and *Collision* was in the top five in that category most weeks. Said Dave Meltzer on *Wrestling Observer Radio*: "This company now has the ability to pay a lot more, WWE has the ability to pay a lot more ... I would tell any top wrestler to get the shortest-term contract possible over the next couple of years. Because, if you're good, the demand for your services is going to be very, very high."

Meanwhile, Tony Khan faced sagging ratings and lower attendance than in previous years. *Dynamite's* premiere in October 2019 drew a million-plus viewers; and that number has dropped by roughly 100,000 with each passing year. Overexposure, with the addition of *Rampage* and *Collision*, is one possible factor.

Another telling metric was *Dynamite's* November 6 rematch against NXT, which had been bumped to Wednesday because of the general election. Dynamite attracted only 523,000 viewers against NXT's special 2300 Arena edition, which drew 619,000.

AEW arena attendance dropped dramatically in 2024. Case in point: After the high mark of All In at London's Wembley Stadium drawing 81,035 last year, attendance for 2024's All In at the same venue fell nearly 40 percent to 46,476.

AEW's talent and match quality had never been in question. Many believed the roster was every bit as impressive as WWE's. Will Ospreay, Mercedes Mone, and Kazuchika Okada—each of whom helped revolutionize the sport during the past decade—signed with AEW in 2024.

Critics suggested dream matches were being given away on weekly editions of *Dynamite* with weak build-up, rather than being the payoff for compelling storylines at AEW PPVs. Bryan Danielson vs. Kazuchika Okada, Danielson vs. Nigel McGuinness, Will Ospreay vs. Ricochet, and Ospreay vs. Claudio Castagnoli were examples.

With AEW having more money to spend in 2025, it was a given that more international stars and former WWE talent—along the lines of Bobby Lashley and The Hurt Syndicate—would join the roster and create at least short-term buzz.

However, a far-sighted storyboard and more disciplined booking seemed more important to AEW's long-term prospects.

FOUR ALL-TIME GREATS BID FAREWELL

THEY WOULD NOT fade away. Four generational talents either concluded or began their victory laps, complete with farewell tours and storybook endings.

The 38-year career of the man called Sting ended in 2024. His 45-minute draw with NWA World champion Ric Flair at *Clash at the Champions* had set him on a trajectory for greatness way back in 1988. Aside from his own world title reigns, Sting became the conscience of WCW during the Monday Night War, enjoyed a full run in TNA, and became a WWE Hall-of-Famer.

In AEW, Sting joined forces with Darby Allin, keeping pace with much younger stars. In his retirement match, he teamed with Allin to defend the World tag title against The Young Bucks on March 3 at Revolution. There, the 65-year-old exceled in a brutal, wild affair with cameos by Ric Flair and Ricky Steamboat—as well as sons Garrett Borden and Steve Borden Jr.—in the hallowed Greensboro Coliseum.

John Cena emerged during WWE's "Ruthless Aggression" era in the early-2000s and would dominate for over a decade, as a 16-time world champion and the face of the company as it transitioned into a PG-rated product. John Bradshaw Layfield bestowed Cena the moniker "Big Match John" for delivering no matter the circumstances, especially at WrestleMania.

At Money in the Bank in Toronto, Cena announced "the last time is now," indicating one final run, which would include appearing at *Raw's* Netflix premiere and competing at WrestleMania 41.

Whether Cena would surpass Ric Flair's record of 16 world titles really didn't matter. He was already counted among Bruno Sammartino, Hulk Hogan, Steve Austin, and The Rock as WWE's all-time greatest.

Bryan Danielson earned his reputation as the sport's greatest pound-for-pound wrestler through his dominant Ring of Honor championship reign; his against-the-odds WWE World title win at WrestleMania 30; and his final chapter in AEW, where his in-ring work arguably reached its peak.

This year, Danielson vowed that his next loss would mean his retirement as an active competitor. That increased the stakes of his All In bout against World champion Swerve Strickland at London's Wembley Stadium. Danielson overcame a very game—and sometimes cruel—Strickland with the LeBell Lock at the 26-minute mark.

Danielson ended his full-time career with a six-week title reign, dropping the belt to Jon Moxley at WrestleDream in the "American Dragon's" backyard of Tacoma, Washington.

Hiroshi Tanahashi, one of New Japan's best in-ring performers ever, leaned into his leadership skills and charisma to help make NJPW the world's number-two wrestling company during the 2010s.

After eight IWGP title reigns and reaching his late-40s, Tanahashi was looking to wind down his in-ring career. In 2023, the veteran vowed to lead New Japan through another rebuilding process, this time as company president. Tanahashi enjoyed a solid 2024, charting reigns as NJPW TV champion and NEVER openweight six-man tag team champ. He also battled stars in their prime, such as Zack Sabre Jr., Kazuchika Okada, and Matt Riddle.

On October 14, Tanahashi announced his farewell tour to culminate at Wrestle Kingdom 20, set to be held at the Tokyo Dome on January 4, 2026.

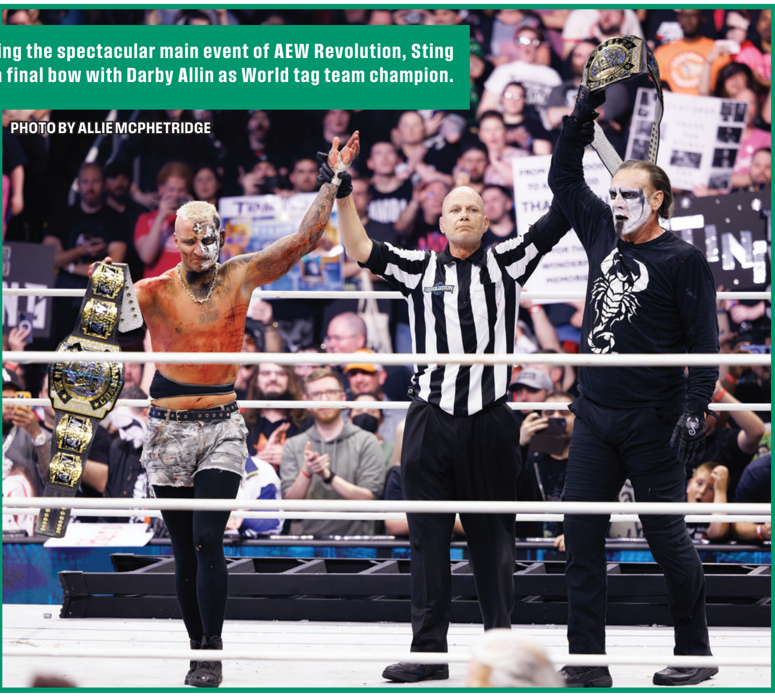

Following the spectacular main event of AEW Revolution, Sting takes a final bow with Darby Allin as World tag team champion.

PHOTO BY ALLIE MCPHETRIDGE

THE BLOODLINE: NEW ROLES FOR ROCK AND REIGNS

WHEN CODY RHODES won his second Royal Rumble, his road to WrestleMania 40 in Philadelphia seemed relatively clear and his quest to beat Roman Reigns for the WWE Undisputed Universal title was near completion. It would end a chapter in perhaps the greatest wrestling story ever: the Bloodline saga.

But Dwayne Johnson gained a seat on TKO's board of directors and made himself available, so the creative plans reverted to 2023, when Reigns vs. The Rock was considered a WrestleMania dream match. Johnson's movie schedule prevented it from taking place at the time, so WWE put Cody Rhodes on full creative throttle.

Rock thought he could shake Cody's hand and whisper in his ear on *Smackdown*, and fans would accept him as Rhodes' replacement against Reigns. Wrong! Many fans, still dismayed by "The American Nightmare's" WrestleMania 39 loss to Reigns, expressed their outrage on social media. Johnson and Creative were forced to improvise. Rock slapped Rhodes at the raucous WM 40 press conference in Las Vegas for another course correction.

Rock spent several weeks embracing his new heel persona as a member of The Bloodline, though he was clearly uncomfortable following Reigns' lead. He teamed with his cousin to beat Rhodes and Seth Rollins on Night 1 of 'Mania 40. This established "Bloodline Rules" for Night 2, which really meant no rules ... and reliable Bloodline interference. On Sunday, however, Rhodes overcame the odds to finish his story, pinning Reigns at Lincoln Financial Field. In doing so, he ended the "Tribal Chief's" reign at 1,316 days.

Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson cinches in the sharpshooter on Seth Rollins during the tag match that headlined WrestleMania 40, Night 1. In many ways, 2024 marked the most exciting year to date for The Bloodline.

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

Johnson returned to Hollywood, and Reigns went on hiatus from WWE to film *Good Fortune* with Keanu Reeves and Seth Rogen. In the meantime, Solo Sikoa—the enforcer whom Reigns deemed his heir—reconstituted The Bloodline with the sons of Haku, Tama Tonga and Tonga Loa, best known as New Japan's Guerrillas of Destiny.

Two months later, the wild unpredictability of ex-MLW champ Jacob Fatu—son of The Tonga Kid—would make the group even more vicious and volatile. Reigns had put his "Wise Man" in charge, yet he was not in control. When Paul Heyman refused to acknowledge Sikoa as Tribal Chief, Fatu delivered a top-rope splash onto Heyman and then helped the Tongans smash him through an announce table.

The new Bloodline had already put Jimmy Uso out of action while Jey Uso found singles success on *Raw*. Roman Reigns returned at SummerSlam, branding himself as the "Original (And Only) Tribal Chief," helping Cody Rhodes retain the Undisputed title against Sikoa. Reigns teamed with Rhodes to defeat Sikoa and Fatu at Bad Blood, with The Rock appearing on the entrance stage to stare down Reigns and Rhodes.

Reigns reunited with Jimmy Uso and a reluctant Jey to face The Bloodline at Crown Jewel, with Sikoa getting a surprise pinfall over the "OTC." That led to Survivor Series, where The Bloodline and Bronson Reed battled Reigns, The Usos, Sami Zayn, and Paul Heyman's last-minute recruit, CM Punk, inside the WarGames structure. The OG Bloodline scored a hard-fought win, with Reigns pinning Sikoa decisively.

Despite the plot twists of 2024, one fact was clear: The Anoa'i family had significantly enhanced its legacy by leading WWE to its most successful period ever.

CODY RHODES FINISHES THE STORY AT BLOCKBUSTER WRESTLEMANIA

ALTHOUGH THE "XL" in "WrestleMania XL" was a Roman numeral, the 40th edition of wrestling's biggest annual event truly was extra large—setting several records, and providing a satisfying finish to one of WWE's most compelling stories in years.

More than 145,000 fans packed Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field on April 6 and 7 for WrestleMania, making it the most successful live event in WWE history. The live gate of $38.5-million over two nights shattered the previous WrestleMania record of $21.6-million set a year earlier.

In addition to those in the building, millions more watched WrestleMania on their televisions or mobile devices. The event generated more than 660 million views across WWE's social channels. And WWE YouTube garnered 67 million views in 24 hours, the most ever for a single day. WWE's U.S. streaming platform, Peacock, also said that WrestleMania was the most watched live event in its history, with 1.3 billion minutes of views over its two days.

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

Still at the height of her decorated "Timeless" title run, Toni Storm makes a surprise appearance at Stardom's WrestleMania Weekend show.

Although the WrestleMania brand on its own was enough to draw considerable interest, WWE loaded up the event with marquee matches, including the in-ring return of Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, who teamed with cousin Roman Reigns to beat Cody Rhodes and Seth Rollins in a high-stakes tag team main event on Night 1.

But it was the Night 2 finale that had captivated fans for more than a year—Rhodes again challenging Reigns for the WWE championship in a rematch of their WrestleMania 39 main event. Taking advantage of the anything-goes "Bloodline Rules" stipulation, Rhodes employed the help of Rollins, Jey Uso, John Cena, and The Undertaker to end Reigns' 1,316-day title run, capture the WWE championship, and "finish the story."

It was the high-point of a career year for the "American Nightmare," who started off 2024 by winning his second consecutive Royal Rumble match. Rhodes also went on to take the inaugural men's Crown Jewel championship by defeating fellow world champion Gunther in Saudi Arabia in November. And Rhodes accomplished another career goal by finally earning the number one spot in the annual "*PWI* 500."

"I'm not a wrestler who pretends like the number doesn't matter. That's how you can spot a liar right away, if they ever tweet, 'Nobody cares about their number on this list.' We all care. And I [care] very much," Rhodes told *PWI*, adding that being ranked atop the world's 500 best wrestlers "feels right."

While Rhodes celebrating his championship victory in the ring with his mother may have been the lasting image of WrestleMania, there was no shortage of other highlights. Rhea Ripley retained her world championship against Becky Lynch in the first match of the two-night event. Bayley won the WWE Women's championship in a show-stealing bout against Iyo Sky. Drew McIntyre beat Seth Rollins for the World heavyweight championship, only to lose it minutes later to Money in the Bank briefcase-holder Damian Priest. And Sami Zayn ended Gunther's record-long reign as Intercontinental champion.

As per usual, WrestleMania Weekend also featured the annual WWE Hall of Fame induction ceremony. The Class of 2024 included Paul Heyman, Bull Nakano, the U.S. Express, Lia Maivia, Thunderbolt Patterson, and Muhammad Ali.

“TIMELESS” TONI LEADS BIG YEAR FOR WOMEN’S WRESTLING

PHOTO BY KEVIN MCELVANEY

Still at the height of her decorated “Timeless” title run, Toni Storm makes a surprise appearance at Stardom’s WrestleMania Weekend show.

TONI STORM WAS most certainly ready for her close-up in 2024—a year that saw the “Timeless” one ride a wave of success that culminated in her topping the “*PWI* Women’s 250” list.

Storm entered the year in her third reign as AEW Women’s World champion, and kept the momentum going through the first half of 2024 with successful title defenses against the likes of Thunder Rosa, Sereena Deeb, and Mina Shirakawa. In addition to winning those key matches, Storm also won over fans with her outsize character, leading her to become one of AEW’s most popular acts. These feats led to her taking the top spot in *PWI’s* annual ranking of the 250 best in women’s wrestling.

After being betrayed by Mariah May and losing the title to her at All In, Storm disappeared from AEW for four months before resurfacing in December—back in her old leather jacket and backwards baseball cap, and with seemingly no memory of her AEW past.

Other women also translated their success in the ring to success in *PWI’s* rankings. Having dominated the WWE women’s tag team division since forming an alliance in April, Bianca Belair and Jade Cargill became the first female duo to earn the number one spot in the annual “*PWI* Tag Team 100.”

Rhea Ripley spent another year as WWE’s biggest female attraction, although she was sidelined for four months with a shoulder injury that forced her to relinquish her WWE Women’s World title. In the absence of “The Eradicator,” several other women stepped up to become headline acts. These included Liv Morgan, who not only took Ripley’s old title, but also her old boyfriend, Dominik Mysterio, and her place in the Judgment Day. In November, Morgan also became the first women’s Crown Jewel champion, beating Smackdown world titleholder Nia Jax.

But for that setback, Jax, too, had a strong year, winning the 2024 Queen of the Ring tournament and defeating Bayley for the WWE Women’s championship at SummerSlam.

Female dominance was not limited to WWE’s main roster. At 23 years old, Roxanne Perez won her second NXT Women’s title in April. She still wears the belt at the time of this writing.

“Now, I feel like I definitely have that mindset of, *Okay, second time around, I deserve to be champion*,” Perez said in an interview in the October issue of *PWI*. “I am confident enough to know that I am one of the best women’s wrestlers WWE has. And I can go against my heroes—Bayley, Natalya, Charlotte (Flair), Alexa Bliss—and hold my own in that ring.”

NXT’s women’s division also got an injection of international star power with the arrivals of former NJPW STRONG and World of Stardom champion Giulia in September, and former STRONG and CMLL Women’s World champion Stephanie Vaquer in October. But if you were looking for a truly dominant women’s world champion in 2024, you would have to look no further than Ring of Honor, where Athena, in September, surpassed Samoa Joe’s 645-day reign as ROH World champion.

TNA WRESTLING RETURNS

Nic Nemeth lays out Moose in his first-ever appearance for the newly reborn TNA Wrestling.

PHOTO BY DOMINIQUE DINH

NIC NEMETH AND Jordynne Grace—two veterans with a reputation for delivering *total, nonstop action* in the ring—helped make TNA's return a successful one in 2024.

Seven years after abandoning the damaged TNA brand to become IMPACT Wrestling, the Anthem Sports-led company went back to its original moniker beginning with its signature pay-per view event, Hard to Kill, on January 13.

The event also marked the TNA debut of Nemeth, who had recently become a free agent following a 20-year run in WWE. Although the former Dolph Ziggler twice wore world title gold in WWE, it was in his new role as wrestling's "Wanted Man" that Nemeth would win major championships across three different countries. In February he captured New Japan's IWGP Global heavyweight title. In April, he traveled to Mexico to win the AAA Mega title. And in July, he beat Moose for the TNA World title, which he still held at press time.

Jordynne Grace was similarly impressive in her third run with the TNA Knockouts title, which she won at Hard to Kill and held for 287 days. Not only did Grace become one of TNA's most reliable headliners in the role, but she also proved her star power outside TNA, including in WWE.

Debuting in the company as a surprise entrant in the Women's Royal Rumble, Grace impressed fans and WWE shot callers so much that she was invited back for several appearances in NXT. Grace even unsuccessfully challenged Roxanne Perez for the NXT Women's championship at the Battleground premium live event in June.

TNA's newfound working relationship with WWE led to several other crossovers, and helped create a breakout wrestling star in Joe Hendry. The Scottish-born journeyman's *NXT* debut in June boosted TV ratings and was one of WWE's most viewed social media clips of 2024. Hendry went on to challenge for the NXT title at No Mercy in September, and for the TNA World title at Bound for Glory in October. Despite fans believing in him, Hendry was unable to bring home the gold in both matches.

TNA's growing momentum was evident by late 2024, when—off the strength of multiple sell-outs—the company announced plans to run pay-per-view events in major markets in 2025, including Rebellion at Los Angeles' Galen Center and Slammiversary in New York's UBS Arena.

Notably, TNA's resurgence in 2024 came despite the departure of its longtime president, Scott D'Amore, who was fired by Anthem in February.

While promoting his new venture, Maple Leaf Pro Wrestling, in an August interview with *Busted Open Radio*, D'Amore acknowledged feeling conflicted about his TNA tenure, which began more than 20 years earlier.

"I was very proud of what we had done as a group, and what we accomplished, and where we came," D'Amore said. "And I was very upset that the reigns got taken away from me at a time that I think we were perched and ready to continue to explode."

VINCE MCMAHON'S RELEVANCE FADES AS SCANDAL GROWS

A replica of the WWE championship belt sits on display at Fanatics Fest 2024. The company that expanded nationally—and later went public—under Vince McMahon has continued on without him and publicly distanced itself from the disgraced former chairman.

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

CHARGES OF SEX trafficking and other abusive behavior regarding then-TKO Executive Chairman Vince McMahon made headlines at the very start of 2024. Former WWE employee Janel Grant, 43, filed a lawsuit against the 78-year-old McMahon, alleging coerced sexual activity, depraved acts such as defecation, and using Grant as a sexual pawn for friends, corporate employees, and contracted talent.

Grant worked for WWE from 2019 to 2022 and had signed a $3-million non-disclosure agreement at McMahon's urging. Grant said she had received only one-third of that amount.

Her suit implicated ex-WWE executive John Laurinaitis, as well as a "WWE Superstar" and "former UFC heavyweight champion," referring presumably to Brock Lesnar.

USA Today reported that McMahon informed Grant in 2022 that his wife, Linda, had learned of their relationship, and that he wanted her to sign an NDA to protect his controlling interest in WWE.

Despite surviving decades of sexual misconduct allegations, McMahon was forced out nearly immediately under the new Endeavor/TKO regime. A McMahon spokesman stated: "This lawsuit is replete with lies, obscene made-up instances that never occurred, and a vindictive distortion of the truth."

On May 30, Grant agreed to stay her case for six months at the request of the U.S. Department of Justice, which had begun its own investigation of McMahon. Interest in the scandal became pronounced in September when Netflix dropped a docuseries titled Mr. McMahon with the tagline, "Mastermind, Madman."

McMahon posted a statement on X the day before its release: "Based on an early partial cut I've seen, this doc falls short and takes the predictable path of conflating the 'Mr. McMahon' character with my true self, Vince. The title and promos alone make that evident … In an attempt to further their misleading account, the producers used a lawsuit based on an affair I ended as evidence that I am, in fact, 'Mr. McMahon.'"

The portions featuring McMahon's interview had been filmed before he was temporarily ousted in 2023 on suspicion of misusing corporate funds to provide hush-money payments to several women. He returned to power in what amounted to a hostile takeover, primarily to shop around WWE to several suitors—and ultimately sold the business to Endeavor. He was later appointed executive chairman of TKO—Endeavor's subsidiary comprised of WWE and the UFC—as a result.

The *Mr. McMahon* docuseries reignited WWE's notorious ring boy scandal, which alleged that former ring announcer Mel Phillips had molested teenaged males recruited to help set up rings and act as gofers at shows back in the 1980s. Five alleged victims from Maryland, where the statute of limitations for historical child sex abuse cases had been lifted, sued WWE as well as Vince and Linda McMahon in November, only for the case to be stayed in December while a challenge to the Maryland law was pending.

By the end of 2024, Linda McMahon had separated from Vince after 58 years of marriage, and, after serving as Small Business Administrator under President Donald Trump, was tapped to serve as Secretary of Education in his second administration.

CMLL GARNERS RAVE REVIEWS, KEY PARTNERSHIPS

THE WORLD'S OLDEST wrestling promotion was also one of its hottest in 2024, as CMLL made Arena Mexico the place to be on most Friday nights.

Helping CMLL pull ahead in its longtime promotional rivalry with AAA were blossoming working relationships with other promotions from around the world. That was on display at CMLL's Homenaje A Dos Leyendas event in March, which was headlined by an eight-man tag team match featuring Blue Panther, Mistico, Ultimo Guerrero, & Volador Jr. defeating AEW stars Bryan Danielson, Claudio Castagnoli, Jon Moxley, & Matt Sydal. Danielson returned to the promotion a couple weeks later to beat Blue Panther in a bucket-list bout for the "American Dragon" that was widely heralded as one of the year's best.

Although guest stars from other promotions helped generate international buzz for CMLL, it was one of the company's most successful homegrown acts that made its weekly *Super Viernes* shows destination viewing. Two decades after his debut in the promotion, Mistico reclaimed his throne as Mexico's top wrestling attraction, and also brought his star power to American audiences with appearances in AEW and MLW—capturing the World middleweight championship of the latter in February.

The success of Mistico and of the company's alliance with AEW converged at CMLL's 91st Anniversary show in September. Mistico defeated AEW stalwart Chris Jericho in the main event of the show, which also included appearances by Willow Nightingale and Orange Cassidy.

CMLL followed up its big anniversary show with its Women's International Grand Prix event in October. Reyna Isis won a 20-woman elimination tag team match to claim the grand prix trophy for Team Mexico.

While CMLL's momentum continued to grow throughout 2024, AAA struggled with bad luck and questionable decision-making all year long. In March, breakout star El Hijo Del Vikingo was forced to vacate his AAA Mega championship due to injury. Rather than take the opportunity to elevate any of its young stars, AAA turned to two WWE headliners from yesteryear, as the vacant title was put up for grabs in a match between Nic Nemeth and Alberto El Patron at the first of three Triplemania events in 2024.

Nemeth won the title. But the feud—and the nostalgia—continued through the third and final Triplemania event of 2024 in August. Nemeth, accompanied by John "Bradshaw" Layfield, lost the title to Alberto, who later shocked fans by revealing himself to be part of a villainous faction alongside Konnan and AAA owner Dorian Roldan.

The power struggle between the trio of rudos and Latin Lover dominated AAA for the remainder of 2024. But there were other notable highlights, including Psicosis II being forced to unmask after losing a nine-man, "Domo De Muerte" hair-vs.-mask cagematch at Triplemania.

Another lucha legend also experienced an emotional career milestone in a AAA ring in 2024, as Vampiro wrestled his final televised match for the promotion in November, teaming with Mecha Wolf and Pagano to defeat Los Vipers in a "lights out" six-man match.

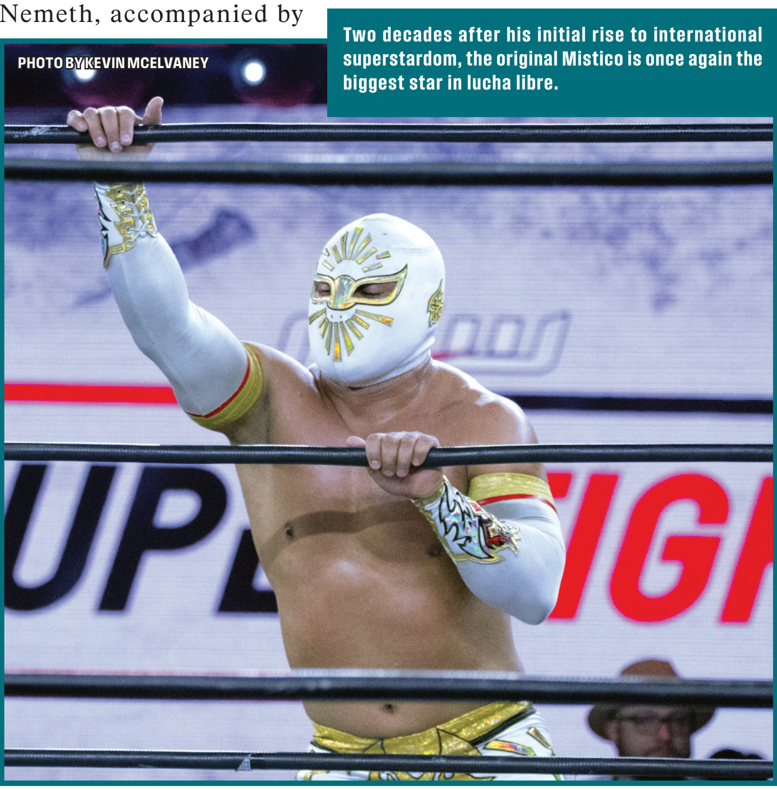


PHOTO BY KEVIN MCELVANEY

Two decades after his initial rise to international superstardom, the original Mistico is once again the biggest star in lucha libre.

NJPW & STARDOM SEE MAJOR CHANGES

SEVERAL HIGH-PROFILE DEPARTURES forced some major shakeups in Bushiroad's two Japanese wrestling promotions, New Japan Pro-Wrestling and World Wonder Ring Stardom, in 2024.

The reality that a new day had dawned in New Japan was apparent at the company's first and biggest major event of 2024, Wrestle Kingdom 18. That show was highlighted by Kazuchika Okada defeating Bryan Danielson in what would be "The Rainmaker's" final Tokyo Dome match as a New Japan talent.

Okada was leaving the promotion he called home for 17 years to join AEW. And following not far behind him was another established NJPW headline act, Will Ospreay, who announced in January that he was "All Elite."

With Okada and Ospreay gone, and longtime New Japan "Ace" Hiroshi Tanahashi winding down his career, NJPW turned to one of its few remaining established headliners, Tetsuya Naito. The veteran talent won his fourth IWGP World title at Wrestle Kingdom, signaling he would carry the the company's main event picture. He would soon get some company at the top of the cards from an unlikely place, as AEW star Jon Moxley beat Naito for his belt at Windy City Riot in April, becoming the first person to wear world titles in WWE, AEW, and NJPW.

Mox dropped the belt back to Naito at Forbidden Door in June, leaving NJPW no closer to fleshing out its top tier. The urgency of the situation was apparent when G1 Climax tournament winner Zack Sabre Jr. announced that he was not waiting until January to cash in his guaranteed world title shot, instead challenging Naito at the King of Pro-Wrestling event in October.

After three Zack Drivers, Sabre Jr. realized his longtime career goal of winning New Japan's top championship. Immediately after capturing the title, Sabre took to the mic to proclaim what was already evident: this was a "*new* New Japan."

"The era has changed," Sabre Jr. said. "There is a new era, and it's definitely Zack Sabre Jr.'s era."

NJPW's sister promotion, Stardom, was similarly forced to undergo some major changes thanks to losing several key figures. In February, news surfaced that Bushiroad had fired Stardom founder, Rossy Ogawa, following months-long political unrest behind the scenes of the joshi promotion.

Unfortunately for Stardom, Ogawa had earned the loyalty of several women in the locker room he helped build 14 years earlier. And so, Ogawa's departure sparked a mass exodus of Stardom talent, including Giulia, Utami Hayashishita, MIRAI, Mai Sakurai, Victoria Yuzuki, Nanae Takahashi, and Nao Ishikawa.

Ogawa used the talent to lay the foundation of his new venture, Dream Star Fighting Marigold, which held its first show in Tokyo in May. Two months later, Marigold crowned its first champion in Sareee, who beat former Stardom pillar Giulia for the vacant title.

Left to hold down the fort at Stardom were Maika and Tam Nakano, who collectively wore the company's prestigious "red belt" throughout most of 2024.

Also helping Stardom recover from its multiple roster departures was a budding working relationship with AEW. The talent exchanges between the two companies saw AEW stars including Willow Nightingale, Toni Storm, and Anna Jay perform on Stardom shows, and Stardom wrestlers, including Nakano, Maika, and Mina Shirakawa, wrestle for AEW.

The IWGP World title reign of Zack Sabre Jr. signaled a new era in New Japan Pro-Wrestling.

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

WORLD WRESTLING ENTERTAINMENT

PHOTOS BY GEORGE TAHINOS

WWE UNDISPUTED CHAMPION **CODY RHODES** (ABOVE LEFT) AND WWE WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION **GUNTHER** (ABOVE RIGHT)

MAIN ROSTER

WWE UNDISPUTED CHAMPIONSHIP

04.07.24 | Cody Rhodes def. Roman Reigns

WWE WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

04.07.24 | Drew McIntyre def. Seth Rollins
04.07.24 | Damian Priest def. Drew McIntyre [Money in the Bank cash-in]
08.03.24 | Gunther def. Damian Priest

WWE WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

04.07.24 | Bayley def. Iyo Sky
08.03.24 | Nia Jax def. Bayley

WWE WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

04.22.24 | Becky Lynch won a battle royal [Filled title vacated by Rhea Ripley on 04.15]
05.25.24 | Liv Morgan def. Becky Lynch

WWE TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP*

04.06.24 | A-Town Down Under def. Judgment Day [Six-pack ladder match for Raw & Smackdown tag team titles]
07.05.24 | DIY def. A-Town Downunder
08.02.24 | The Bloodline def. DIY
10.25.24 | Motor City Machine Guns def. The Bloodline
12.06.24 | DIY def. Motor City Machine Guns
*Formerly the Smackdown tag team championship

WWE WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP*

04.06.24 | Awesome Truth def. Judgment Day [Six-pack ladder match for Raw & Smackdown tag team titles]
06.24.24 | Judgment Day def. Awesome Truth
12.16.24 | War Raiders def. Judgment Day
*Formerly the Raw tag team championship

WWE WOMEN'S TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

01.26.24 | Kabuki Warriors def. Katana Chance & Kayden Carter
05.04.24 | Bianca Belair & Jade Cargill def. Kabuki Warriors
06.15.24 | Unholy Union def. Bianca Belair & Jade Cargill [Triple-threat bout also involving Shayna Baszler & Zoey Stark]

INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPIONSHIP

04.06.24 | Sami Zayn def. Gunther
08.03.24 | Bron Breakker def. Sami Zayn
09.24.24 | Jey Uso def. Bron Breakker
10.21.24 | Bron Breakker def. Jey Uso

U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP

08.03.24 | LA Knight def. Logan Paul
11.30.24 | Shinsuke Nakamura def. LA Knight

WOMEN'S U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP

12.14.24 | Chelsea Green def. Michin [Tournament to crown inaugural champion]

SPEED CHAMPIONSHIP

04.26.24 | Ricochet def. Johnny Gargano [Tournament final to crown inaugural champion]

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

CHELSEA GREEN IS CROWNED THE INAUGURAL WWE U.S. WOMEN'S CHAMPION

06.07.24 | Andrade def. Ricochet
11.15.24 | Dragon Lee def. Andrade

SPEED WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

10.04.24 | Candice LeRae def. Iyo Sky
[Tournament final to crown inaugural champion]

NXT

NXT CHAMPIONSHIP

04.23.24 | Trick Williams def. Ilja Dragunov
07.07.24 | Ethan Page def. Trick Williams
[Four-way bout also included Je'Von Evans and Shawn Spears]
10.01.24 | Trick Williams def. Ethan Page

NXT WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

04.06.24 | Roxanne Perez def. Lyra Valkyria

NXT TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

02.13.24 | Wolfdogs def. D'Angelo Family
04.09.24 | Fraxiom def. Wolfdogs
08.13.24 | Chase U def. Fraxiom
09.01.24 | Fraxiom def. Chase U

NORTH AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIP

01.09.24 | Oba Femi def. Dragon Lee
10.08.24 | Tony D'Angelo def. Oba Femi

WOMEN'S NORTH AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIP

06.09.24 | Kelani Jordan won ladder match
[Six-way bout to crown inaugural champion, also included Fallon Henley, Jaida Parker, Lash Legend, Michin, and Sol Ruca]
10.27.24 | Fallon Henley def. Kelani Jordan
[Gauntlet match also included Jacy Jayne and Jazmyn Nyx]

HERITAGE CUP CHAMPIONSHIP

02.27.24 | Charlie Dempsey def. Noam Dar
05.14.24 | Tony D'Angelo def. Charlie Dempsey
08.13.24 | Charlie Dempsey def. Tony D'Angelo
12.17.24 | Lexis King def. Charlie Dempsey

ALL ELITE WRESTLING

AEW WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

04.21.24 | Swerve Strickland def. Samoa Joe
08.25.24 | Bryan Danielson def. Swerve Strickland
10.12.24 | Jon Moxley def. Bryan Danielson

WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

08.25.24 | Mariah May def. Toni Storm

WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

02.07.24 | Darby Allin & Sting def. Big Bill & Ricky Starks
04.21.24 | Young Bucks def. FTR
[Tournament final to fill title vacated by Sting's retirement on 03.03]
10.30.24 | Private Party def. Young Bucks

PHOTO BY BASIL MAHMUD

THE ELITE: AEW CONTINENTAL CHAMP **KAZUCHIKA OKADA** WITH FORMER TNT CHAMPION **JACK PERRY** AND THREE-TIME WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS **THE YOUNG BUCKS**

WORLD TRIOS CHAMPIONSHIP

04.21.24 | Bang Bang Gang def. Billy Gunn & The Acclaimed
07.20.24 | The Patriarchy def. Bang Bang Gang
[Bout to fill title vacated on 07.13]
08.25.24 | Death Riders def. The Patriarchy
[Four-way ladder match also included House of Black and Bang Bang Gang]

TNT CHAMPIONSHIP

03.20.24 | Adam Copeland def. Christian Cage
06.30.24 | Jack Perry won ladder match
[Six-way bout to fill title vacated on 05.29, also included Dante Martin, El Phantasmo, Konosuke Takeshita, Lio Rush, and Mark Briscoe]
11.23.24 | Daniel Garcia def. Jack Perry

TBS CHAMPIONSHIP

04.21.24 | Willow Nightingale def. Julia Hart
05.26.24 | Mercedes Mone def. Willow Nightingale

MERCEDES MONE WITH THE TBS AND NJPW STRONG WOMEN'S TITLE BELTS

PHOTO BY JESSICA TORRES

INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP*

03.03.24 | Roderick Strong def. Orange Cassidy
05.26.24 | Will Ospreay def. Roderick Strong
07.17.24 | MJF def. Will Ospreay
08.25.24 | Will Ospreay def. MJF
10.12.24 | Konosuke Takeshita def. Will Ospreay
[Triple-threat bout also included Ricochet]
*Title renamed "American Championship" by MJF during his reign; reverted to "International Championship" under Will Ospreay

CONTINENTAL CHAMPIONSHIP

03.20.24 | Kazuchika Okada def. Eddie Kingston

FTW CHAMPIONSHIP*

04.21.24 | Chris Jericho def. Hook
08.25.24 | Hook def. Chris Jericho
*Non-sanctioned title, retired by Hook on 09.25

TNA WRESTLING

TNA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

01.13.24 | Moose def. Alex Shelley
07.20.24 | Nic Nemeth def. Moose
[Six-way elimination bout also included Frankie Kazarian, Joe Hendry, Josh Alexander, and Steve Maclin]

KNOCKOUTS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

01.13.24 | Jordynne Grace def. Trinity
10.26.24 | Masha Slamovich def. Jordynne Grace

MOOSE, TNA X DIVISION CHAMPION

PHOTO BY BASIL MAHMUD/COURTESY TNA WRESTLING

PHOTOS BY BASIL MAHMUD/COURTESY TNA WRESTLING

KNOCKOUTS WORLD CHAMPION MASHA SLAMOVICH (ABOVE LEFT) AND KNOCKOUTS WORLD TAG CHAMPS SPITFIRE (ABOVE RIGHT)

WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

03.08.24 | The System def. ABC
07.20.24 | ABC def. The System
09.13.24 | The System def. ABC
10.26.24 | Hardys def. The System
[Triple-threat bout also included ABC]

KNOCKOUTS WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

01.13.24 | Decay def. MK Ultra
02.23.24 | MK Ultra def. Decay
03.08.24 | Spitfire def. MK Ultra
05.03.24 | The Malisha def. Spitfire
09.13.24 | Spitfire def. The Malisha
[Tasha Steelz competed in lieu of The Malisha's Alisha Edwards]

X DIVISION CHAMPIONSHIP

02.23.24 | Mustafa Ali def. Chris Sabin
07.20.24 | Mike Bailey def. Mustafa Ali

08.30.24 | Zachary Wentz def. Mike Bailey
[Ultimate X bout also included Hammerstone, Jason Hotch, Laredo Kid, and Riley Osborne]
09.13.24 | Mike Bailey def. Zachary Wentz
10.27.24 | Moose def. Mike Bailey

DIGITAL MEDIA CHAMPIONSHIP*

01.13.24 | Crazzy Steve def. Tommy Dreamer
04.30.24 | Laredo Kid def. Crazzy Steve
05.19.24 | AJ Francis def. Laredo Kid
07.20.24 | PCO def. AJ Francis
*Defended alongside International heavyweight championship, a vacant title reinstated by AJ Francis during his reign

RING OF HONOR

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

04.05.24 | Mark Briscoe def. Eddie Kingston
10.23.24 | Chris Jericho def. Mark Briscoe

WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Athena (Held since Dec. 2022)

WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

08.17.24 | Sons of Texas def. Undisputed Kingdom

PHOTO BY BASIL MAHMUD

SONS OF TEXAS RETAIN THE ROH WORLD TAG TITLE

TV CHAMPIONSHIP

06.28.24 | Atlantis Jr. def. Kyle Fletcher
10.12.24 | Brian Cage def. Atlantis Jr.
12.20.24 | Komander def. Brian Cage
[Survival of the Fittest match also included AR Fox, Blake Christian, Mark Davis, and Willie Mack]

WOMEN'S TV CHAMPIONSHIP

04.05.24 | Billie Starkz def. Queen Aminata
[Tournament final to crown inaugural champion]
07.26.24 | Red Velvet def. Billie Starkz

PURE CHAMPIONSHIP

07.26.24 | Lee Moriarty def. Wheeler YUTA

RED VELVET RETAINS HER ROH WOMEN'S TV TITLE

PHOTO BY RICKY HAVLIK/©RING OF HONOR

SIX-MAN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

01.17.24 | Bang Bang Gang def. Mogul Embassy
07.27.24 | Dustin Rhodes & The Von Erichs def. Undisputed Kingdom
[Bout to fill title vacated on 07.10]

MAJOR LEAGUE WRESTLING

PHOTO BY KEVIN McELVANEY

MLW WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP **SATOSHI KOJIMA** CELEBRATES HIS TITLE WIN

WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

02.03.24 | Satoshi Kojima def. Alex Kane

WORLD MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

02.29.24 | Mistico def. Rocky Romero

WOMEN'S WORLD FEATHERWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Janai Kai (Held since Oct. 2023)

WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

02.29.24 | WTF def. Second Gear Crew
05.11.24 | CozyMAX def. Second Gear Crew
[Bout to fill title vacated on 04.22]
08.29.24 | Contra Unit def. CozyMAX
12.05.24 | CozyMAX def. Contra Unit

NATIONAL OPENWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

05.11.24 | Bad Dude Tito def. Rickey Shane Page
11.09.24 | Matthew Justice def. Bad Dude Tito

PHOTO BY MIKEY NOLAN

ROCKY ROMERO DONS THE MLW WORLD MIDDLEWEIGHT BELT AT AN NJPW EVENT

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE

WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

08.31.24 | Thom Latimer def. EC3

WORLD WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Kenzie Paige (Held since Aug. 2023)

WORLD JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

03.02.24 | Joe Alonzo def. Colby Corino
06.28.24 | Alex Taylor def. Joe Alonzo\

PHOTO BY STEVE BEYER

KENZIE PAIGE, NWA WORLD WOMEN'S CHAMPION

WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

06.01.24 | Knox And Murdoch def. Blunt Force Trauma

WORLD WOMEN'S TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

01.13.24 | King Bees def. Pretty Empowered
08.31.24 | It Girls def. King Bees

PHOTO BY STEVE BEYER

KNOX AND MURDOCH, NWA WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

03.02.24 | Thom Latimer a won four-way match
[Bout to fill title vacated on 01.14, also included Blake Troop, Burchill, and Zyon]
08.31.24 | Mims won a four-way match
[Bout to fill title vacated same day by Thom Latimer, who was pursuing World heavyweight championship]

TV CHAMPIONSHIP

01.13.24 | Max The Impaler def. Mims
10.26.24 | Carson Bartholomew Drake def. Max The Impaler

WOMEN'S TV CHAMPIONSHIP

10.18.24 | Big Mama won a four-way match
[Bout to fill title vacated on 06.01.24 by Max The Impaler, who was pursuing World Women's championship]

MID-AMERICA CHAMPIONSHIP

06.01.24 | Jeremiah Plunkett won a four-way match
[Bout to fill reinstated title, vacant since May 2012, also included Dante Casanova, Hunter Drake, and Mario Pardua]

U.S. TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

04.13.24 | Daisy Kill & Talos def. The Fixers
[Bout to fill title vacated on 03.02]
08.31.24 | Country Gentlemen def. Daisy Kill & Talos
[Four-way bout also included The Fixers and The Slimeballz]

NEW JAPAN PRO-WRESTLING

IWGP WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

01.04.24 | Tetsuya Naito def. SANADA
04.12.24 | Jon Moxley def. Tetsuya Naito
06.30.24 | Tetsuya Naito def. Jon Moxley
10.14.24 | Zack Sabre Jr. def. Tetsuya Naito

IWGP WORLD JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

01.04.24 | El Desperado def. Hiromu Takahashi
02.23.24 | SHO def. El Desperado
06.16.24 | El Desperado def. SHO
07.05.24 | DOUKI def. El Desperado

IWGP WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Mayu Iwatani (Held since Apr. 2023)

IWGP HEAVYWEIGHT TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

01.04.24 | Guerrillas of Destiny def. Bishamon
02.11.24 | Bullet Club def. Guerrillas of Destiny
04.06.24 | Bishamon def. Bullet Club
05.04.24 | Bullet Club def. Bishamon
06.09.24 | TMDK def. Bullet Club
[Four-way elimination bout for IWGP heavyweight and STRONG openweight tag team titles, also included Guerrillas of Destiny and Bishamon]
11.04.24 | United Empire def. TMDK
12.09.24 | VACANT
[HENARE of United Empire was unable to defend due to injury]

IWGP JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

01.04.24 | Catch 2/2 def. Bullet Club War Dogs
02.04.24 | Bullet Club War Dogs def. Catch 2/2
10.14.24 | Intergalactic Jet Setters def. Bullet Club War Dogs

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

TMDK: IWGP WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION **ZACK SABRE JR.** (ABOVE) AND FORMER DOUBLE-TAG CHAMPS **MIKEY NICHOLLS & SHANE HASTE** (BELOW)

PHOTO BY JESSICA TORRES

IWGP GLOBAL CHAMPIONSHIP*

01.04.24 | David Finlay won a triple-threat
[Bout to crown inaugural champion also included Jon Moxley and Will Ospreay]
02.23.24 | Nic Nemeth def. David Finlay
05.04.24 | David Finlay def. Nic Nemeth
*Formerly IWGP U.S. championship

NJPW TV CHAMPIONSHIP

01.04.24 | Hiroshi Tanahashi def. Zack Sabre Jr.
02.23.24 | Matt Riddle def. Hiroshi Tanahashi
04.12.24 | Zack Sabre Jr. def Matt Riddle
05.03.24 | Jeff Cobb def. Zack Sabre Jr.
10.14.24 | Ren Narita def. Jeff Cobb
[Triple-threat bout also included Yota Tsuji]

NEVER OPENWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

01.20.24 | EVIL def. Tama Tonga
04.06.24 | Shingo Takagi def. EVIL
06.16.24 | HENARE def. Shingo Takagi
09.29.24 | Shingo Takagi def. HENARE

NEVER OPENWEIGHT SIX-MAN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

04.14.24 | Hiroshi Tanahashi, Oleg Boltin, & Toru Yano def. House of Torture
[Bout to fill title vacated by Kazuchika Okada, Tomohiro Ishii, & Hiroshi Tanahashi on 01.24]
06.09.24 | Los Ingobernables de Japon def. Hiroshi Tanahashi, Oleg Boltin, & Toru Yano
06.16.24 | Hiroshi Tanahashi, Oleg Boltin, & Toru Yano def. Los Ingobernables de Japon

KOPW CHAMPIONSHIP*

01.04.23 | Taiji Ishimori won a four-way match
[Bout to fill title vacated on 01.01, also included Great-O-Khan, Toru Yano, and YOH]
01.20.24 | Great-O-Khan def. Taiji Ishimori
04.27.24 | Yuya Uemura def. Great-O-Khan
06.09.24 | Great-O-Khan def. Yuya Uemura
*Title retired by Great-O-Khan on 12.22

STRONG OPENWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

05.11.24 | Gabe Kidd def. Eddie Kingston

STRONG WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

03.10.24 | Stephanie Vaquer def. Giulia
06.30.24 | Mercedes Mone def. Stephanie Vaquer
[Title-vs.-title title bout also for AEW TBS championship]

STRONG OPENWEIGHT TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

04.12.24 | TDMK def. Guerrillas of Destiny
[Four-way bout also included West Coast Wrecking Crew and Tom Lawlor & Fred Rosser]
05.11.24 | Guerrillas of Destiny def. TMDK

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

GABE KIDD WITH HIS STRONG OPENWEIGHT TITLE BELT

06.09.24 | TMDK def. Guerrillas of Destiny
[Four-way elimination bout for the IWGP heavyweight and STRONG openweight tag titles, also included Bullet Club and Bishamon]
11.08.24 | Grizzled Young Veterans def. TMDK
12.15.24 | West Coast Wrecking Crew def. Grizzled Young Veterans

WORLD WONDER RING STARDOM

WORLD OF STARDOM CHAMPIONSHIP

07.28.24 | Natsuko Tora def. Maika
08.31.24 | Tam Nakano def. Natsuko Tora

GODDESSES OF STARDOM CHAMPIONSHIP

03.30.24 | Crazy Star def. AphroditE
05.05.24 | FWC def. Crazy Star
06.29.24 | God's Eye def. FWC
07.23.24 | H.A.T.E. def. God's Eye

ARTIST OF STARDOM CHAMPIONSHIP

01.03.24 | God's Eye def. Donna Del Mondo
03.30.24 | Empress Nexus Venus def. God's Eye
08.04.24 | Cosmic Angels def. Empress Nexus Venus

WONDER OF STARDOM CHAMPIONSHIP

06.22.24 | Mika Iwata def. Saori Anou
07.15.24 | Saori Anou def. Mika Iwata
[Bout also contended for Sendai Girls' championship]
07.27.24 | Natsupoi def. Saori Anou

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

NATSUPOI WITH THE WONDER OF STARDOM AND ARTIST OF STARDOM TITLE BELTS

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

STARDOM'S MAYU IWATANI WITH THE IWGP WOMEN'S BELT

HIGH SPEED CHAMPIONSHIP

05.27.23 | Saki Kashima def. Mei Seira
[Triple-threat also included Ram Kaichow]
04.27.24 | Saya Kamitani def. Saki Kashima
[Four-way bout alco included Fukigen Death and Saya Iida]
07.28.24 | Mei Seira def. Saya Kamitani

FUTURE OF STARDOM CHAMPIONSHIP

10.05.24 | Miyu Amasaki def. Rina

NEW BLOOD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

07.23.24 | Azusaba Inaba & Rino def. STARS

PRO-WRESTLING NOAH

GHC HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

02.04.24 | Hijo De Dr. Wagner Jr. def. Kenoh
05.04.24 | Kaito Kiyomiya def. Hijo De Dr. Wagner Jr.

GHC JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

07.13.24 | AMAKUSA def. Daga
09.01.24 | Daga def. AMAKUSA

GHC WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

11.11.24 | Kouki Amarei won a battle royal
[Gauntlet battle royal to crown inaugural champion]

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

KENOH, GHC HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION

GHC TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

06.16.24 | Naomichi Marufuji & Takashi Sugiura def. GLG

GHC NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

04.11.24 | HAYATA def. Jack Morris
07.13.24 | Ulka Sasaki def. HAYATA
09.14.24 | Manabu Soya def. Ulka Sasaki

GHC HARDCORE OPENWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

05.04.24 | Shuji Ishikawa def. Ninja Mack

GHC JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

01.02.24 | GLG def. Alpha Wolf & Dragon Bane
[Triple-threat bout also included Alejandro & Ninja Mack]
06.09.24 | Eita & Shuji Kondo def. GLG
09.01.24 | HAYATA & YO-HEY def. Eita & Shuji Kondo

DREAM STAR FIGHTING MARIGOLD

MARIGOLD CHAMPIONSHIP

07.13.24 | Sareee def. Giulia
[Bout to crown inaugural champion]

TWIN STAR CHAMPIONSHIP

07.30.24 | Mai Sakurai & MIRAI def. Miku Aono & Natsumi Showzuki
[Tournament final to crown inaugural champions]
12.23.24 | CHIAKI & Nagisa Nozaki def. Mai Sakurai & MIRAI

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

HAYATA & YO-HEY, GHC JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT TAG CHAMPS

UNITED NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP

07.13.24 | Miku Aono def. Bozilla
[Tournament final to crown inaugural champion]

SUPERFLY CHAMPIONSHIP

07.13.24 | Natsumi Showzuki def. Misa Matsui
[Tournament final to crown inaugural champion

DDT PRO-WRESTLING

KO-D OPENWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

08.25.24 | Shinya Aoki def. Yuki Ueno
11.04.24 | Chris Brookes def. Shinya Aoki

DDT UNIVERSAL CHAMPIONSHIP

09.08.24 | Yuki Iino def. MAO
10.20.24 | MAO def. Yuki Iino

GRINGO LOCO, DDT UNIVERSAL CHAMP

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

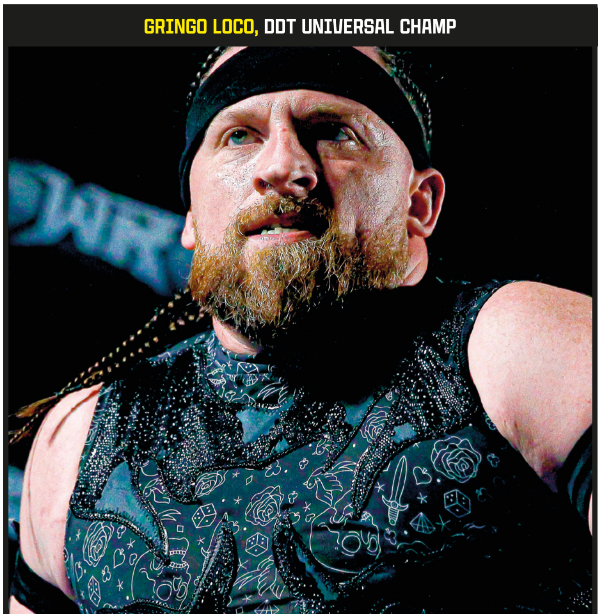


PHOTO BY OCTOPUS STRETCH

NATSUMI SHOWZUKI IS CROWNED THE INAUGURAL MARIGOLD SUPERFLY CHAMPION

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

CHRIS BROOKES, KO-D OPENWEIGHT CHAMP

11.09.24 | Miyu Yamashita def. MAO
[Triple-threat bout also included Mike Bailey]
11.10.24 | Gringo Loco def. Miyu Yamashita
[Triple-threat bout also included Nick Wayne]

DDT EXTREME CHAMPIONSHIP

01.28.24 | Shunma Katsumata def. Kazuki Hirata
09.29.24 | Akito def. Shunma Katsumata
[Tag team match also featured Yuni and Kazuma Sumi]
10.20.24 | Danshoku Dieno def. Akito

KO-D TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

01.21.24 | DAMNATION T.A. def. Romance Dawn
02.07.24 | Burning def. DAMNATION T.A.
08.10.24 | Schadenfreude International def. Burning
09.20.24 | 37KAMIINA def. Schadenfreude International

KO-D SIX-MAN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

04.26.24 | DAMNATION T.A. def. Danshoku Dieno, Jun Akiyama, & Makoto Oishi def. 37KAMIINA
06.05.24 | Smile Squash def. DAMNATION T.A.
07.21.24 | DAMNATION T.A. def. Smile Squash
[Four-way survival bout also included Schadenfreude International and Shunma Katsumata, To-y, & Aja Kong]

TOKYO JOSHI PRO-WRESTLING

PRINCESS OF PRINCESS CHAMPIONSHIP

03.31.24 | Miu Watanabe def. Miyu Yamashita

MIU WATANABE, TJPW PRINCESS OF PRINCESS CHAMPION

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

INTERNATIONAL PRINCESS CHAMPIONSHIP

01.04.24 | Yuki Arai def. Max The Impaler

PRINCESS TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

01.04.24 | Ryo Mizunami & Yuki Aino won a three-way match
[Bout to fill title vacated on 12.31.23 by Free WiFi]
03.31.24 | Daisy Monkey def. Ryo Mizunami & Yuki Aino
09.22.24 | 121000000 def. Daisy Monkey

ALL JAPAN PRO-WRESTLING

ALL JAPAN TRIPLE CROWN CHAMPIONSHIP

03.30.24 | Yuma Anzai def. Katsuhiko Nakajima
08.17.24 | Yuma Aoyagi def. Yuma Anzai
11.04.24 | Davey Boy Smith Jr. def. Yuma Aoyagi

WORLD JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

03.09.24 | Rising HAYATO def. Dan Tamura
07.13.24 | Naruki Doi def. Rising HAYATO

WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

02.25.24 | Baka No Jidai def. Kento Miyahara & Yuma Aoyagi
[Bout to fill title vacated on 02.11 by Saito Brothers]
03.30.24 | Saito Brothers def. Baka No Jidai

THE SAITO BROTHERS WITH THEIR AJPW WORLD TAG TITLE BELTS

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

ALL ASIA TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

01.14.24 | Atsushi Onita & To-y def. Eruption
03.30.24 | Dan Tamura & Hikaru Sato def. Atsushi Onita & To-y
06.24.24 | MUSASHI & Seiki Yoshioka def. Dan Tamura & Hikaru Sato
10.13.24 | ELPIDA def. MUSASHI & Seiki Yoshioka

GAORA TV CHAMPIONSHIP

01.02.24 | Black Menso-re def. Minoru Tanaka
01.14.24 | Seigo Tachibana def. Black Menso-re
06.24.24 | Fuminori Abe def. Seigo Tachibana
10.22.24 | Seigo Tachibana def. Fuminori Abe
12.08.24 | Yuko Miyamoto def. Seigo Tachibana

TV SIX-MAN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

07.18.24 | Chihiro Hashimoto, Shuji Ishikawa, & Yuu def. Maya Yukihi, Mayumi Ozaki, & Suwama
10.23.24 | Hokuto-gun def. Chihiro Hashimoto, Shuji Ishikawa, & Yuu

DRAGONGATE

OPEN THE DREAM GATE CHAMPIONSHIP

06.04.24 | Ben-K def. Luis Mante
07.21.24 | YAMATO def. Ben-K

YAMATO, OPEN THE DREAM GATE CHAMPION

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

OPEN THE BRAVE GATE CHAMPIONSHIP

07.21.24 | Dragon Dia def. Hyo
12.15.24 | YAMATO def. Dragon Dia
[Title-vs.-title bout also for YAMATO's Open the Dream Gate championship]

OPEN THE TWIN GATE CHAMPIONSHIP

05.05.24 | PARADOX def. Alejandro & Kaito Kiyomiya

11.03.24 | Natural Vibes def. PARADOX

12.15.24 | Z-Brats def. Natural Vibes

OPEN THE TRIANGLE GATE CHAMPIONSHIP

03.03.24 | Z-Brats def. D'Courage
[Bout to fill title vacated on 02.24]

05.09.24 | Natural Vibes def. Z-Brats

12.10.24 | VACANT
[Title vacated after BIG BOSS Shimizu of Natural Vibes was suspended]

12.15.24 | PARADOX def. Z-Brats
[Bout to full title vacated on 12.10.24]

SENDAI GIRLS' PRO-WRESTLING

SENDAI GIRLS' CHAMPIONSHIP

07.15.24 | Saori Anou def. Mika Iwata
[Bout also contended for Wonder of Stardom championship]

09.13.24 | Mika Iwata def. Saori Anou

11.17.24 | DASH Chisako def. Mika Iwata

12.08.24 | Meiko Satomura def. DASH Chisako

TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

02.20.24 | Reiwa Ultima Powers def. Team 200kg

03.17.24 | Manami & Ryo Mizunami def. Reiwa Ultima Powers

07.15.24 | Bob Bob Momo Banana def. Manami & Ryo Mizunami

09.27.24 | Team 200kg def. Bob Bob Momo Banana

11.09.24 | Lena Kross & VENY def. Team 200kg

12.08.24 | Bob Bob Momo Banana def. Lena Kross & VENY

JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

11.09.24 | Chi Chi def. YUNA
[Bout to fill title vacated in Jul. 2022]

SAREEE WITH THE SEADLINNNG AND MARIGOLD CHAMPIONSHIP BELTS

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

LUCHA LIBRE AAA WORLDWIDE

AAA MEGA CHAMPIONSHIP

04.27.24 | Nic Nemeth def. Alberto El Patron
[Bout to fill title vacated on 03.16 by Hijo Del Vikingo]

08.17.24 | Alberto El Patron def. Nic Nemeth

REINA DE REINAS CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Flammer (Held since Aug. 2023)

WORLD CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

08.17.24 | Matt Riddle def. Komander
[Triple-threat bout also included Laredo Kid]

12.07.24 | Laredo Kid def. Matt Riddle

WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

06.11.24 | Negros Casas & Psycho Clown def. Nueva Generacion Dinamita

08.17.24 | Raj Dhesi & Satnam Singh def. Negros Casas & Psycho Clown
[Three-way bout also included Los Wagners]

WORLD TRIOS CHAMPIONSHIP

11.17.24 | Psycho Circus def. Los Vipers

WORLD MIXED TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

10.06.24 | Crazzy Steve & Havok def. Abismo Negro Jr. & Flammer

12.08.24 | La Hiedra & Mr. Iguana def. Crazzy Steve & Havok

LA HIEDRA, ONE-HALF OF THE WORLD MIXED TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS

La Hiedra
ULTIMATE STARZ PROMOTIONS

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

LATIN AMERICAN CHAMPIONSHIP

11.10.24 | El Mesias def. Octagon Jr.

CONSEJO MUNDIAL DE LUCHA LIBRE

CMLL WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Gran Guerrero (Held since Nov. 2022)

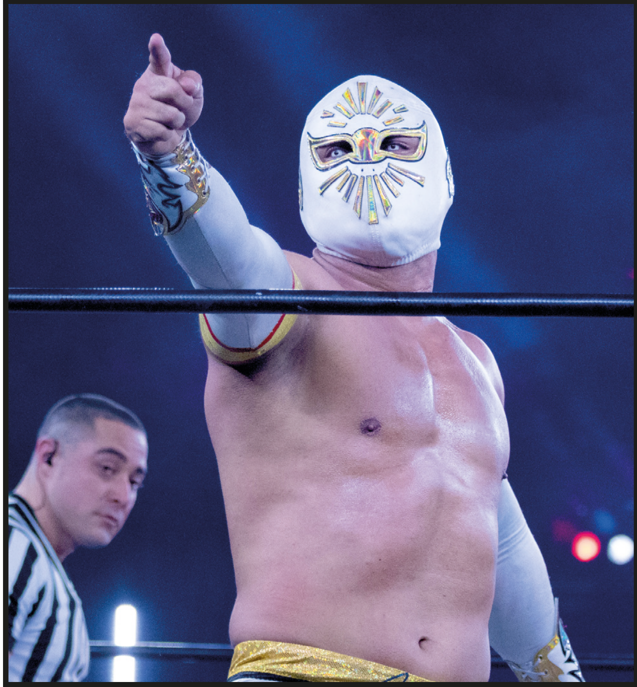
WORLD WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

07.13.24 | Willow Nightingale won a triple-threat match [Bout to fill title vacated on 07.13, also included Lluvia and Viva Van]

09.13.24 | Zeuxis def. Willow Nightingale

WORLD MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Templario (Held since May 2023)



MISTICO, WHO VOLUNTARILY ENDED HIS LENGTHY HISTORIC MIDDLEWEIGHT TITLE REIGN

PHOTO BY KEVIN McELVANEY

WORLD WELTERWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Titan (Held since Dec. 2019)

WORLD LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

03.29.24 | Averno def. Barbaro Cavernario

WORLD LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Stigma (Held since Mar. 2022)

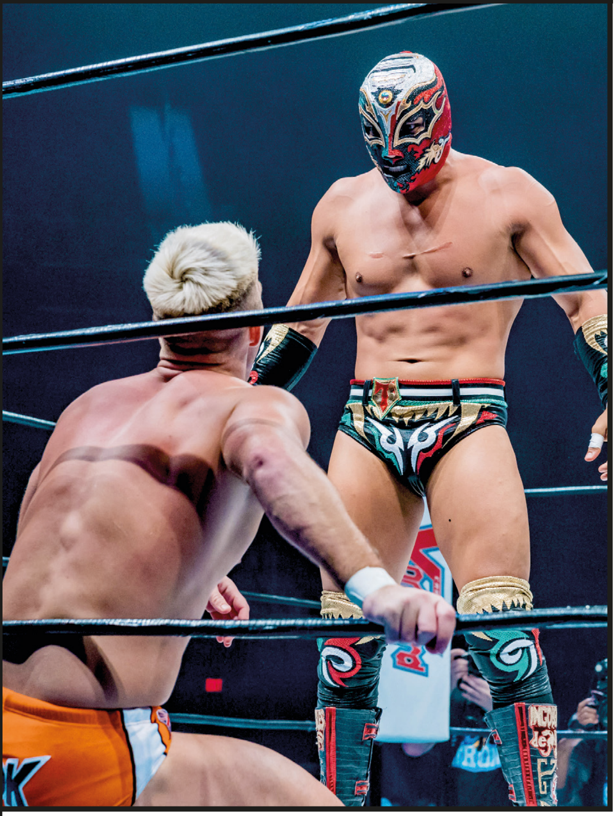
WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Nuevos Ingobernables (Held since Jan 2022)

WORLD WOMEN'S TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

09.16.23 | Lluvia & Tessa Blanchard def. Persephone & Zeuxis [Tournament final to fill title vacated on 07.10]

12.13.24 | VACANT [Title vacated when Tessa Blanchard left CMLL]



TITAN, CMLL WORLD WELTERWEIGHT CHAMP, FACES ZACK SABRE JR. IN NON-TITLE ACTION

PHOTO BY JESSICA TORRES

WORLD TRIOS CHAMPIONSHIP

02.05.24 | Los Barbaros def. Atlantis Jr., Star Jr., & Volador Jr.

07.16.24 | Mascara Dorada, Neon, & Star Jr. def. Los Barbaros

09.27.24 | Los Infernales def. Mascara Dorada, Neon, & Star Jr.

MEXICAN NATIONAL HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Star Black (Held since Jun. 2023)

MEXICAN NATIONAL WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

09.27.24 | Sanely def. Reyna Isis

MEXICAN NATIONAL LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Esfinge (Held since May 2023)

MEXICAN NATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Los Depredadores (Held since Jul. 2023)

MEXICAN NATIONAL WOMEN'S TAG TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP

03.08.24 | Andromeda & Skadi def. Chicas Indomables

MEXICAN NATIONAL TRIOS CHAMPIONSHIP

07.09.24 | Viajeros Del Espacio def. Los Indestructibles

NWA HISTORIC LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Atlantis Jr. (Held since Feb. 2023)

NWA HISTORIC MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

11.15.24 | Flip Gordon def. Villano III Jr. [Bout to fill title relinquished by Mistico on 10.30]

NWA HISTORIC WELTERWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP

N/C | Mascara Dorada (Held since Dec. 2023)

AND STILL…

INDEPENDENT
WRESTLING
CHAMPION
INDEPENDENT
WRESTLING
CHAMPION

Krule has officially reigned as IWTV Independent Wrestling World champ since New Year's Eve 2023. Just don't dare tell him that other belt is illegitimate!

PHOTO BY ALLIE McPHETRIDGE

WRESTLING
PAN AFRIKAN WORLD DIASPORA
CHAMPION

Suge D has held onto the Pan Afrikan World Diaspora title belt since winning it from Trish Adora in October 2023.
PHOTO BY JAYLEE MEDIA

2024 STAFF MEMORIES

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

Cody Rhodes' victory over Roman Reigns at WrestleMania 40 was the pinnacle of his career and a defining moment for WWE. It was a moment that Rhodes himself must have, at times, thought would never happen. Perhaps that's why the emotion felt on that chilly night in Philly was so palpable. When Samantha Irvin announced Rhodes as the winner—her voice cracking as she struggled to hold back tears—I'm not ashamed to say I, too, got a little choked up. Blessed and cursed with the weight of carrying a surname synonymous with another man, Cody's journey has also been uniquely his own. His victory was a testament to his own resilience and the power of storytelling in professional wrestling. It taught us that when it feels like there's not much left to believe in, we can always believe in ourselves.

—Jason McVeigh, Contributing Writer

It was very disturbing to watch Mads "Krule" Krugger, who had just beaten Jacob Fatu in a Baklei Brawl, roll the near-300-pounder into a body bag and Contra Unit thugs unceremoniously carry the once-awesome Samoan out of the ring. Fatu had been a phenom, a wondrous blend of size and agility, and the unstoppable MLW World champion for 819 days. And it had come to this? Splitting from Contra and turning babyface didn't work out for him. But I knew he had become a free agent only two weeks earlier, and maybe he'd pop up in WWE. For Fatu, that low point in Philadelphia was simply a precursor to a breakout year as a member of The Bloodline. In 2024, fans worldwide would know the maniacal—yet amazing—"Samoan Werewolf."

—Harry Burkett, Senior Writer

PHOTO BY KEVIN McELVANEY

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

TMDK
IWGP
WORL

Pro wrestling in 2024 felt like the pre-pandemic pro wrestling that I loved! It gave us what may be (probably is) the last roll call at the Tokyo Dome. It gave us the strength of Konosuke Takeshita (in the words of Shinya Aoki) in NJPW's G1 Climax and as AEW's International champion. It finally gave us Zack Sabre Jr. as the G1 Climax winner *and* IWGP World heavyweight champion.

It gave us the "Sun Goddess" Sareee in her true form—after years away—learning the other side of what pro wrestling, in the business form, can be. It gave us the most amazing independent pro wrestling, by way of DEADLOCK Pro, Prestige Wrestling, Pro Wrestling Revolver, and West Coast Pro (just to name a few). But most importantly, it gave fans around the world cross-promotional collaborations that, in my opinion, should become the norm!

—Issa Marie, Contributing Photographer

Growing up a wrestling fan in the 1980s, there were few sounds sweeter than the voice of Don Pardo announcing, "*Saturday Night Live* will not air this week so that NBC can bring to you *Saturday Night's Main Event*." Before the era of monthly pay-per-views, *SNME* was the ultimate destination for high-stakes match-ups and jaw-dropping angles. I never got the chance to witness a *SNME* taping in person during the show's original run, even though I lived just 30 minutes from its original site, Long Island's Nassau Coliseum. And so, it was downright surreal sitting in the Coliseum nearly 40 years later and taking in a *Saturday Night's Main Event* in person, complete with Animotion's "Obsession" blaring over the speakers and a feather boa-wearing Jesse "The Body" Ventura at the announcers' desk. For one night, it was 1985 all over again.

—Al Castle, Senior Writer

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2024 STAFF MEMORIES

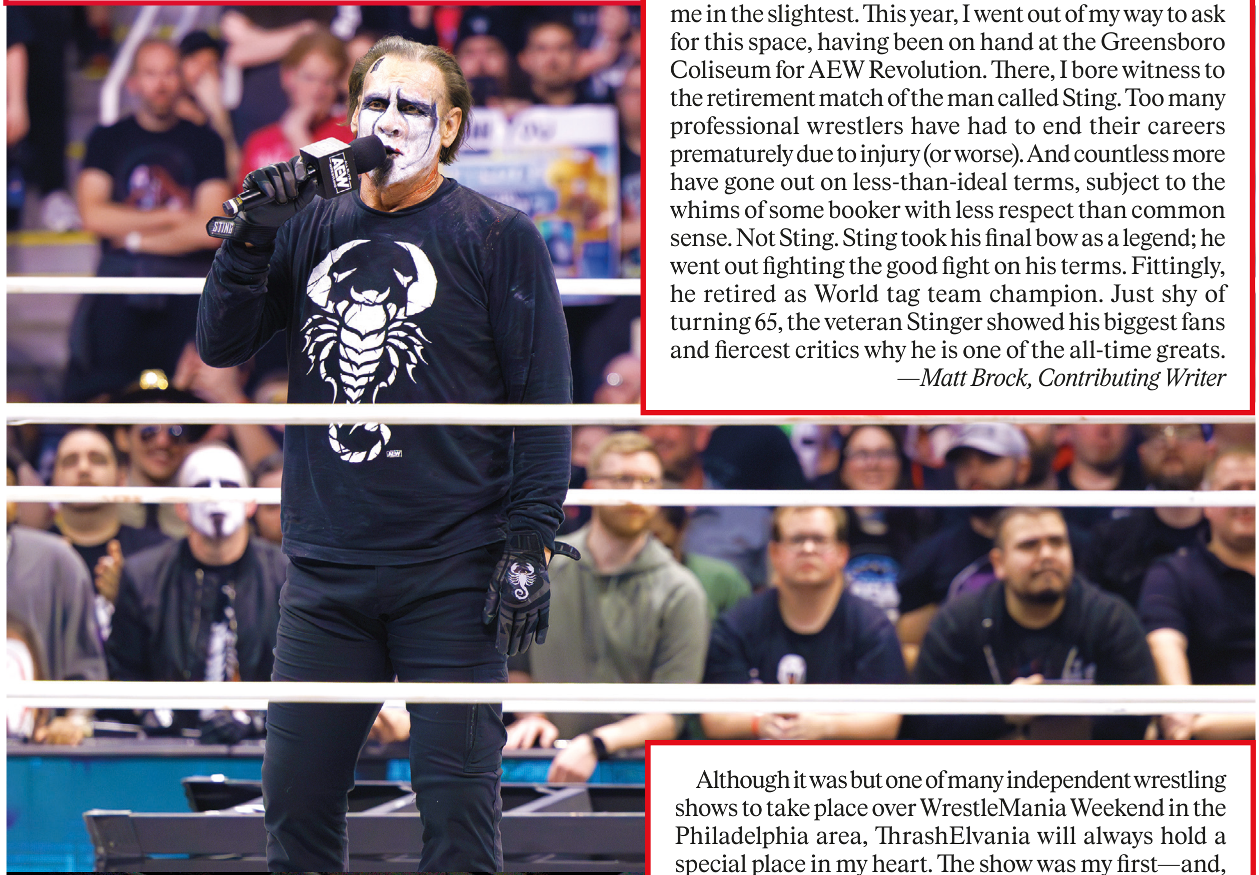


PHOTO BY ALLIE McPHETRIDGE

I haven't been asked to contribute a year-end memory in a while. And, to honest, that usually doesn't bother me in the slightest. This year, I went out of my way to ask for this space, having been on hand at the Greensboro Coliseum for AEW Revolution. There, I bore witness to the retirement match of the man called Sting. Too many professional wrestlers have had to end their careers prematurely due to injury (or worse). And countless more have gone out on less-than-ideal terms, subject to the whims of some booker with less respect than common sense. Not Sting. Sting took his final bow as a legend; he went out fighting the good fight on his terms. Fittingly, he retired as World tag team champion. Just shy of turning 65, the veteran Stinger showed his biggest fans and fiercest critics why he is one of the all-time greats.

—Matt Brock, Contributing Writer

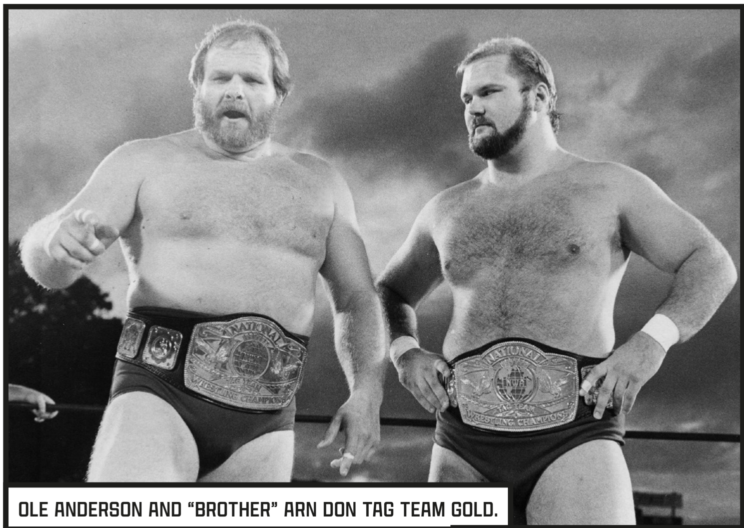
Luxury TATTOOS
EXIT

PHOTO BY ISSA MARIE

Although it was but one of many independent wrestling shows to take place over WrestleMania Weekend in the Philadelphia area, ThrashElvania will always hold a special place in my heart. The show was my first—and, in all likelihood, only—effort as a wrestling promoter. But it was more than that: a tribute to my wife Megan, who lost her battle with bile duct cancer last year, and the enduring love we shared. Featuring some of my personal favorite wrestlers from all over the globe, the Saturday afternoon card is still available to watch on the IWTV streaming service, with all royalties being donated in perpetuity to the Cholangiocarcinoma Foundation.

—Kevin McElvaney, Editor-in-Chief

IN MEMORIAM



OLE ANDERSON AND "BROTHER" ARN DON TAG TEAM GOLD.

Louie Tillet
Yutaka Yoshie
Afa Anoa‘i
Sika Anoa‘i
Chris Markoff
Asahi
Al Zinck
Killer Khan
Ice Train
Leo Burke
Mighty Inoue
James Castle
Jax Dane
Akebono
Bob Bruggers
Liger Rivera

REY MISTERIO SR. AND KONNAN SHOW ADMIRABLE TEAMWORK IN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING.

Sid Eudy (Vicious)
The Mongolian Mauler
Mike "Virgil" Jones
"Big Mac" McKie
Ole Anderson
Kuniaki Kobayashi
Paul "Butcher" Vachon

JAMES CASTLE, PICTURED HERE IN 2019, TOUCHED THE LIVES OF MANY ON THE BRITISH WRESTLING SCENE.

PHOTO BY SARAH BARRACLOUGH/@BRITWRESPICS

"Big Cat" Scott Henson
Kevin Sullivan
Rey Misterio Sr.
"Shooter" Tony Jones
"Bad Bones" John Klinger
Francisco Ciatso
Anthony Gaines

JAX DANE CHATS WITH COLLEAGUE AND FREQUENT TAG PARTNER TIM STORM.

COURTESY OF NWA

2024 IN PHOTOS

DISCLAIMER: As in previous years, most of the captions in our "Year In Photos" section are written in good fun. If something seems like it's meant to be taken as a joke, it probably is!

Drew McIntyre playfully points at our hardworking photographer, presumably before saying the most heinous possible thing about CM Punk.

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

ECW legend The Sandman poses for a quick photo with a familiar-looking fan.

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

Stanley Weston Award winner Dave Meltzer praised Mina Shirakawa for having "incredible live show charisma." And boy, he wasn't kidding!

PHOTO BY KEVIN MCELVANEY

Deonna Purrazzo attempts to wake Thunder Rosa from a poorly timed nap.

PHOTO BY KEVIN MCELVANEY

Members of Amboss prepare to suplex Masato Tanaka ... or are they leading a round of “For He’s A Jolly Good Fellow”?

PHOTO BY KEVIN MCELVANEY

Official Referee
F.Schulz

Following the main event of WrestleMania 40, CM Punk takes a moment to Skype with Larry The Dog.

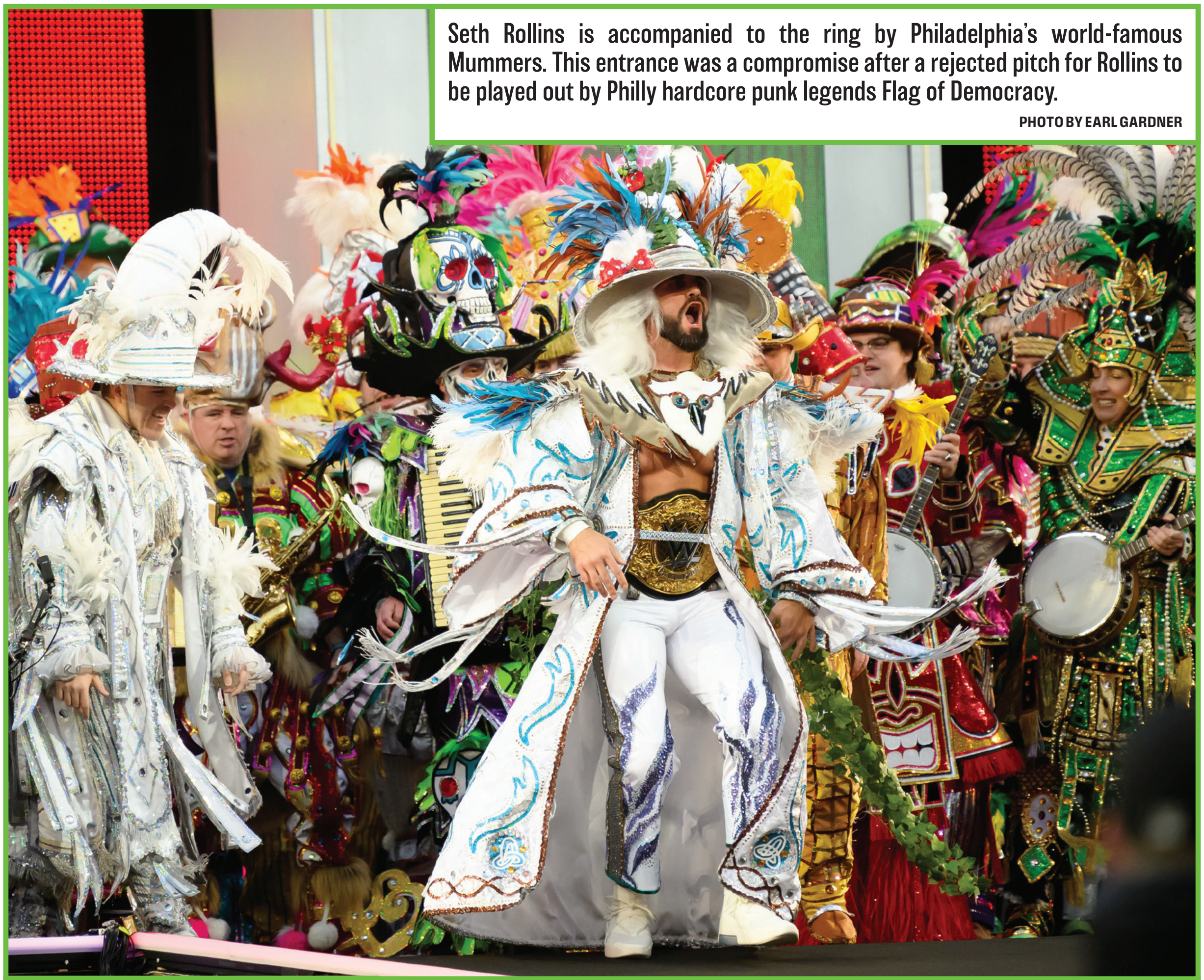
PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

Mims and AC Cazana are all smiles for our *PWI* cameraman.

PHOTO BY STEVE BEYER

POV: You told Reka Tehaka your best knock-knock joke. She is unamused.

PHOTO BY STEVE BEYER

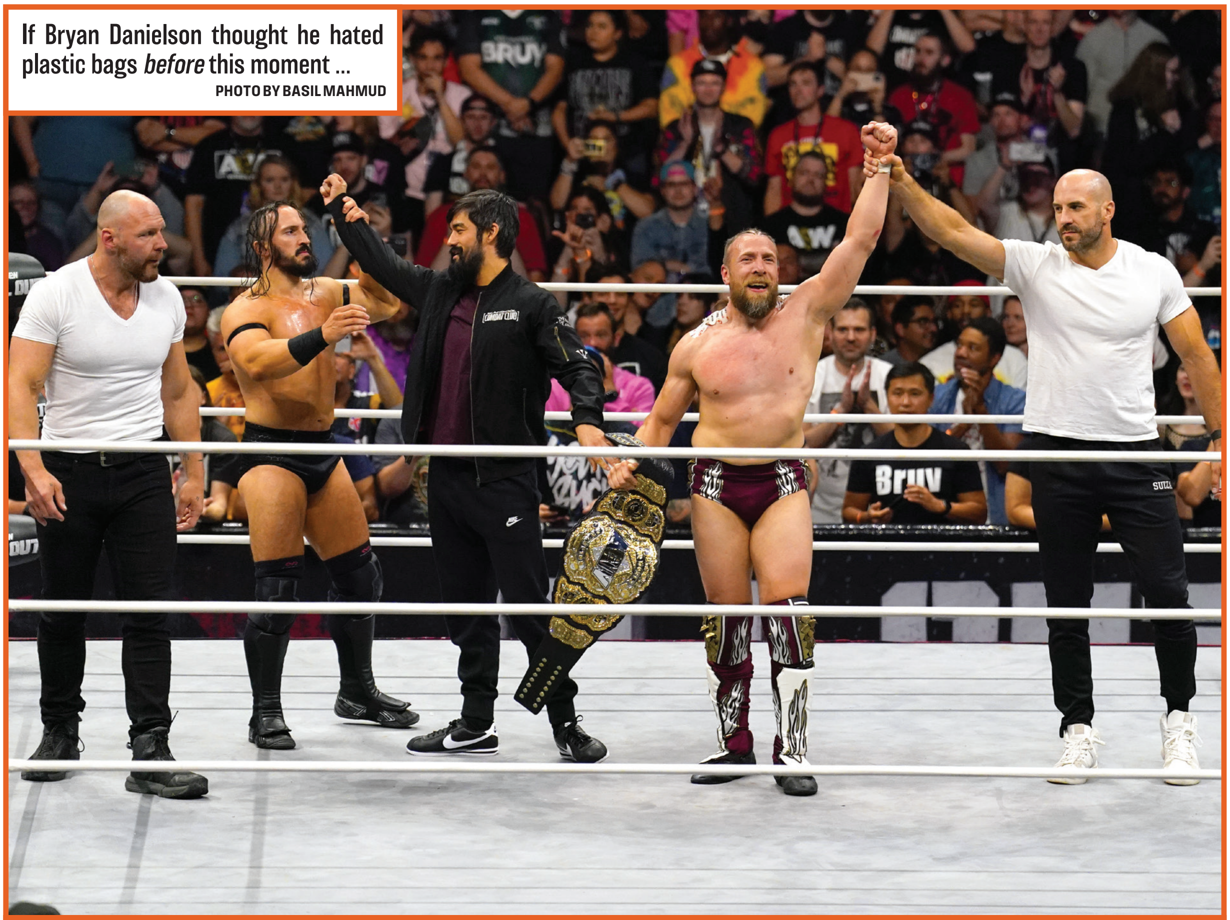


Seth Rollins is accompanied to the ring by Philadelphia's world-famous Mummers. This entrance was a compromise after a rejected pitch for Rollins to be played out by Philly hardcore punk legends Flag of Democracy.

PHOTO BY EARL GARDNER

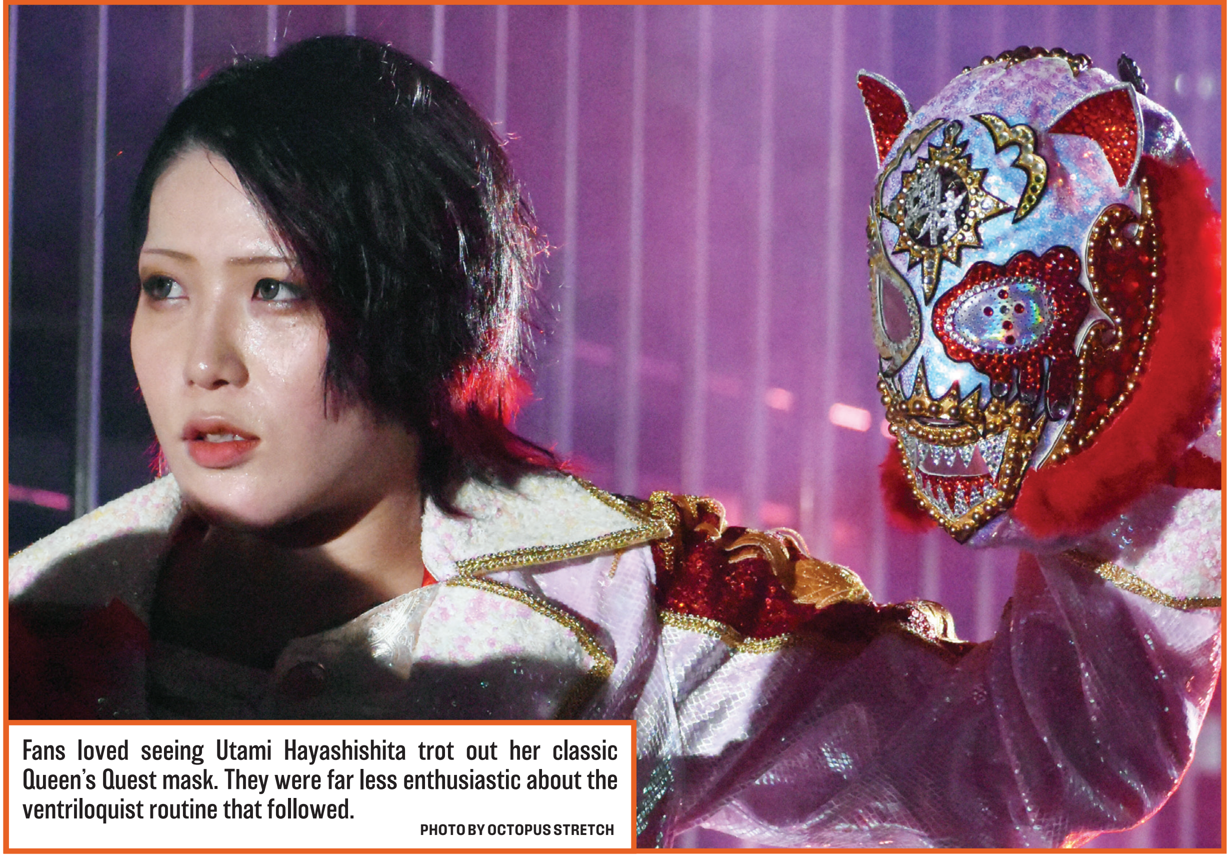
Backstage at Prestige Wrestling, Chris Sabin enjoys a Red Bull with the Invisible Man and John Cena.

PHOTO BY DOMINIQUE DINH



If Bryan Danielson thought he hated plastic bags *before* this moment ...

PHOTO BY BASIL MAHMUD

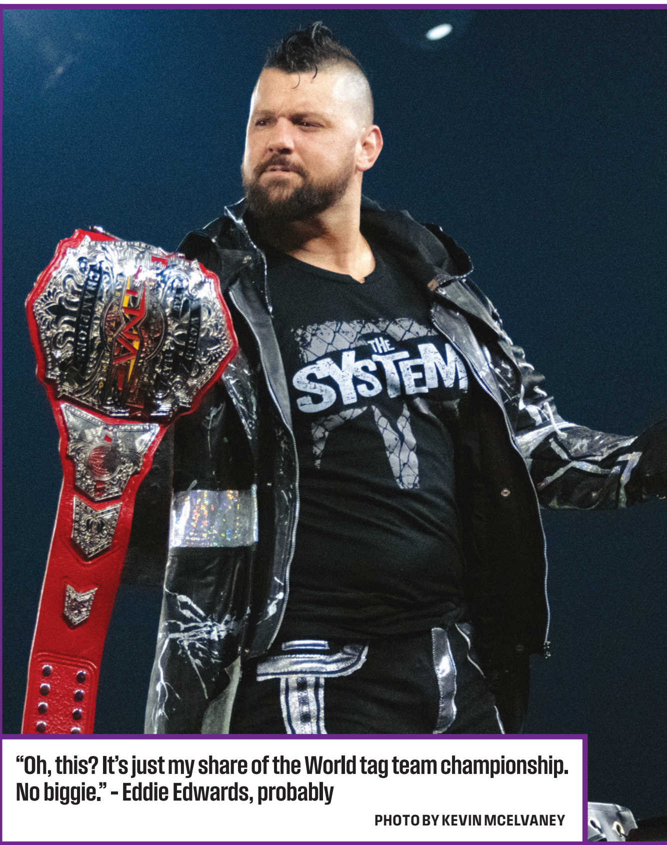


Fans loved seeing Utami Hayashishita trot out her classic Queen's Quest mask. They were far less enthusiastic about the ventriloquist routine that followed.

PHOTO BY OCTOPUS STRETCH

"Cowboy" James Storm and "Miss Texas" Jackie Moore: Two Southern wrestling icons unite at The Big Event in New York.

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS



"Oh, this? It's just my share of the World tag team championship. No biggie." - Eddie Edwards, probably

PHOTO BY KEVIN MCELVANEY

Lady Frost is just chilling with rising star Brittnie Brooks.

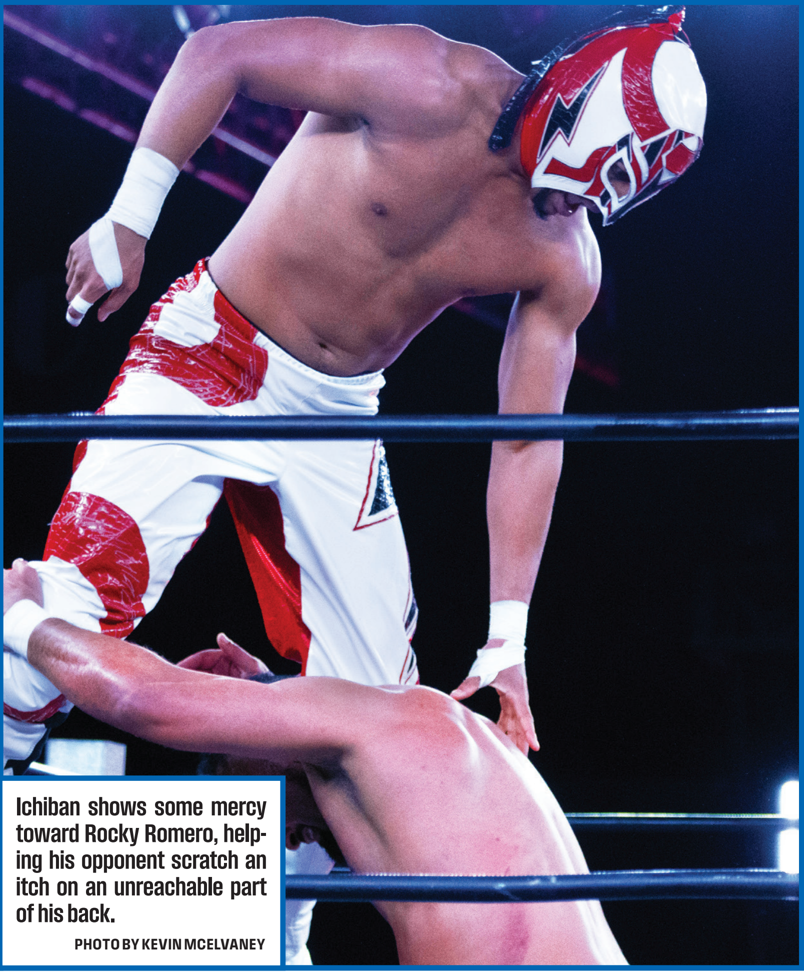
PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

"So, it's a modern retelling of *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which Heath Ledger falls for Julia Stiles after initially being paid to go out with her. Hearts are broken and mended, and copious hijinx ensue." - Will Ospreay, explaining the plot of the 1999 film *10 Things I Hate About You*

PHOTO BY JOHN SMOLEK

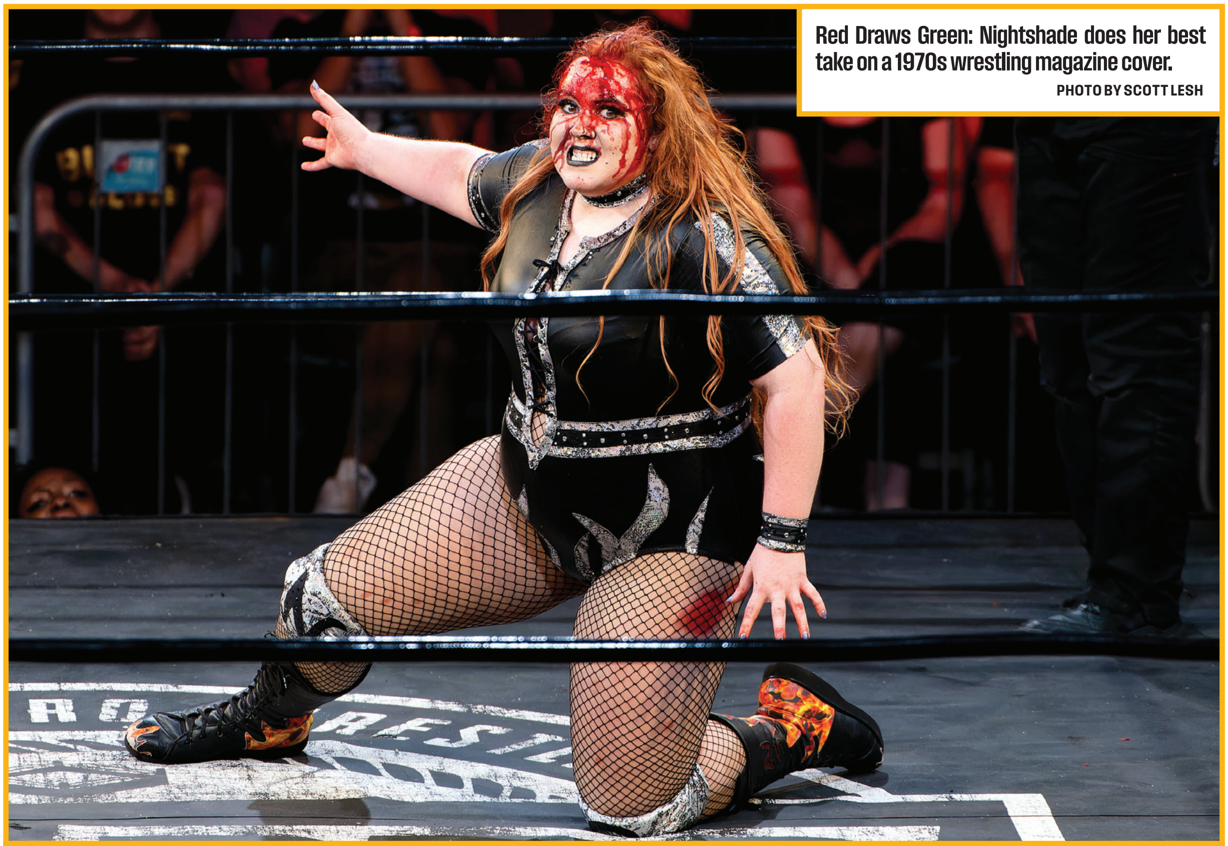
WWE ID signee Marcus Mathers experiences another banner moment, as he learns of the long-awaited return of nacho fries to the Taco Bell menu.

PHOTO BY KEVIN MCELVANEY



Ichiban shows some mercy toward Rocky Romero, helping his opponent scratch an itch on an unreachable part of his back.

PHOTO BY KEVIN MCELVANEY



Red Draws Green: Nightshade does her best take on a 1970s wrestling magazine cover.

PHOTO BY SCOTT LESH

Fresh off her stint as an NXT guest referee, Dawn Marie prepares to meet her adoring public. Thankfully, there were no projectile chairs to dodge during her meet-and-greet.

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

Bob Bob Momo Banana (Mio Momono & Yurika Oka) prepare to compete for the Sendai Girls' tag team belts. If these two don't get a Jamba Juice endorsement deal, we are at a loss.

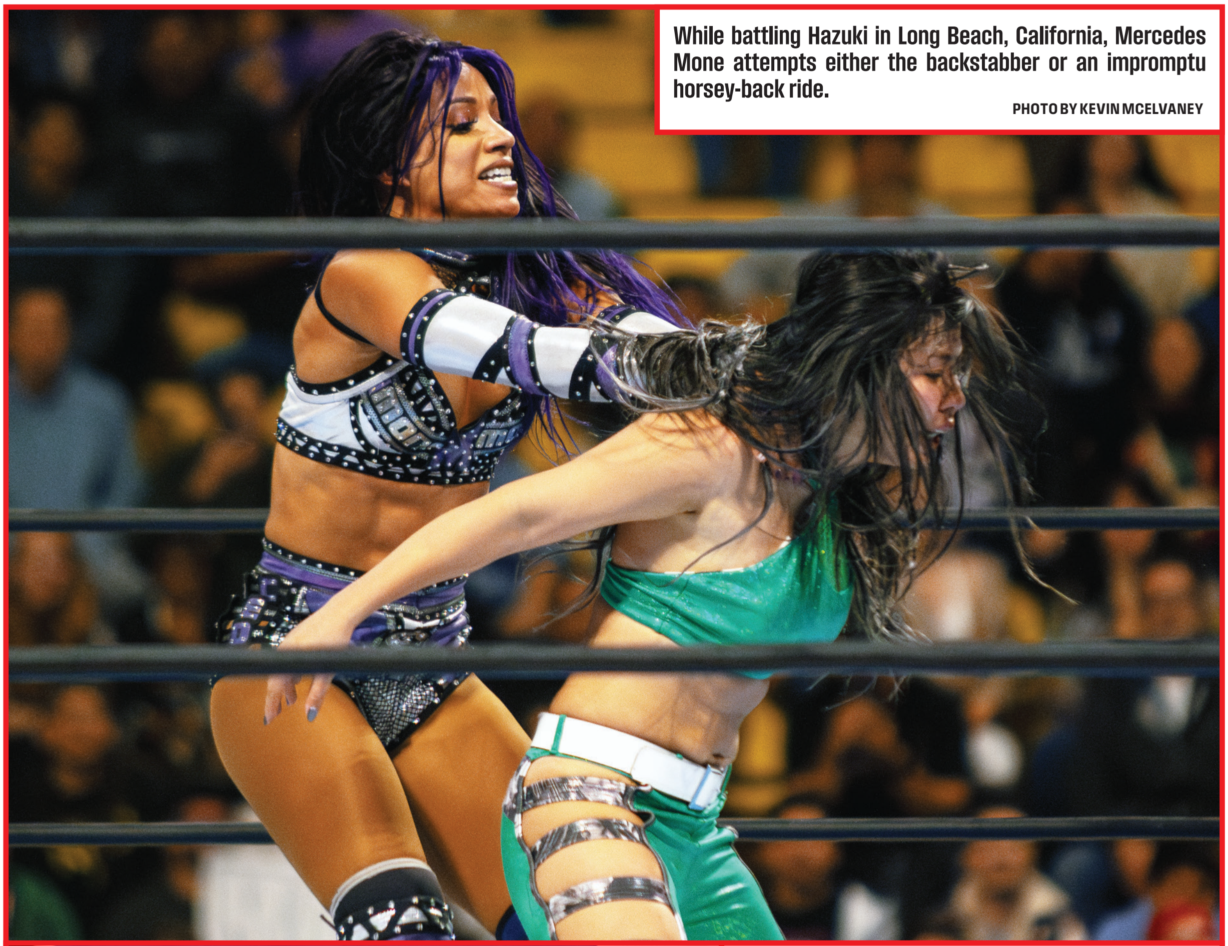
PHOTO BY OCTOPUS STRETCH

"Hey, do ya think they're almost done making these lousy jokes?" - Hallowicked to Matt Makowski, presumably while reading this section

PHOTO BY KEVIN MCELVANEY

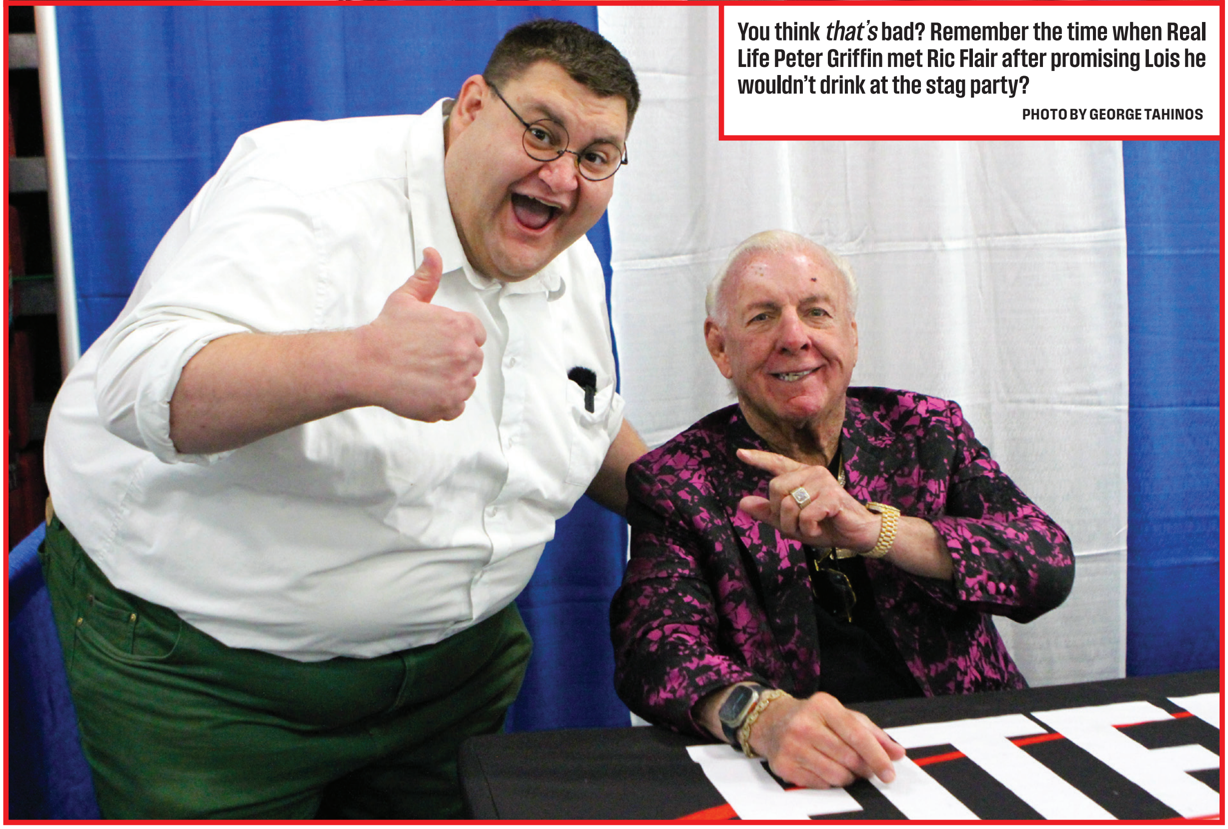
During 16 Carat Gold Weekend in Germany, Aigle Blanc recommends the *apfelschorle* to a straight-edge fan seeking to unload one of their drink tickets.

PHOTO BY KEVIN MCELVANEY



While battling Hazuki in Long Beach, California, Mercedes Mone attempts either the backstabber or an impromptu horsey-back ride.

PHOTO BY KEVIN MCELVANEY



You think *that's* bad? Remember the time when Real Life Peter Griffin met Ric Flair after promising Lois he wouldn't drink at the stag party?

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

JCW

LUNACY

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THE FINISH

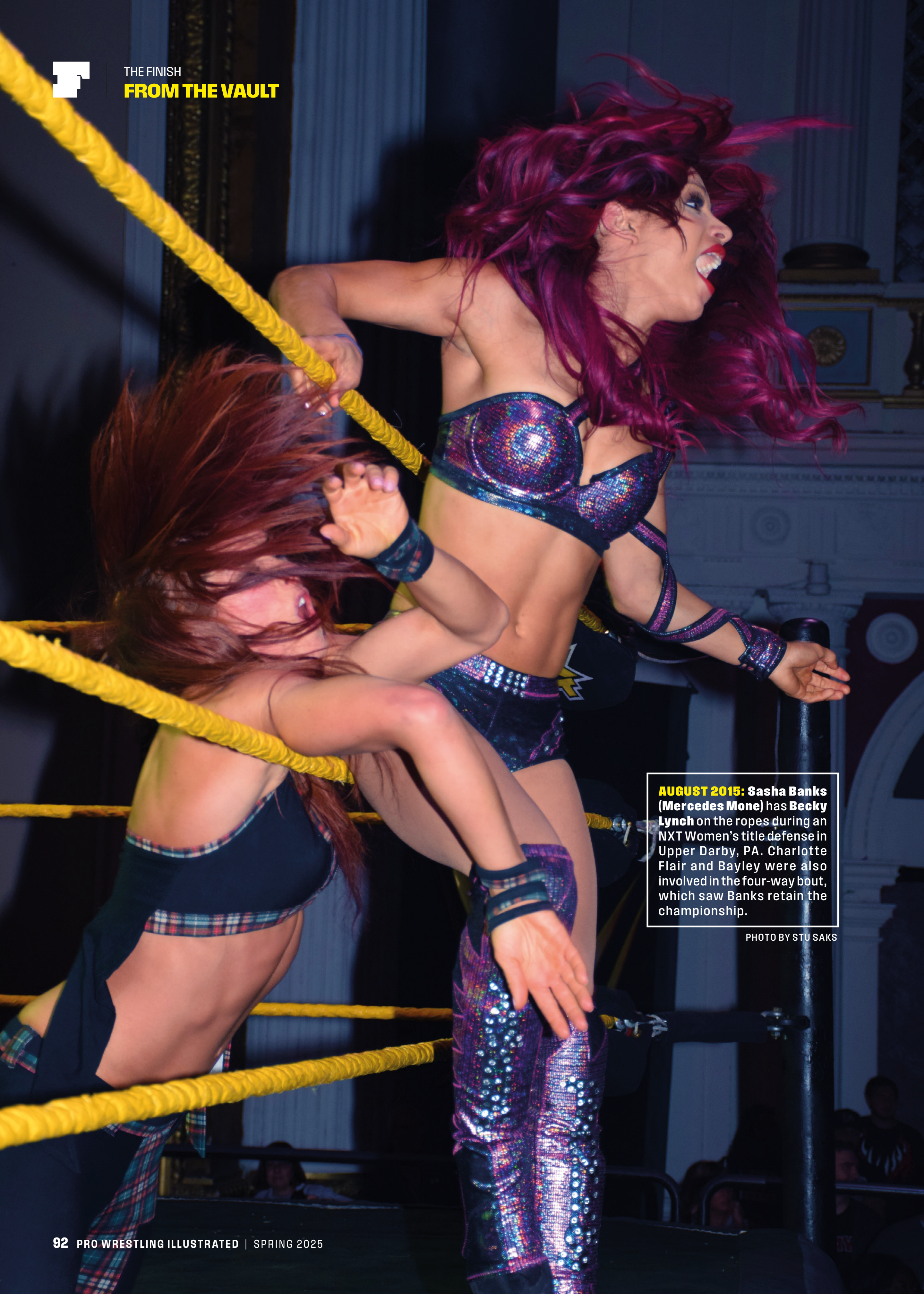
FROM THE VAULT **92** | A WORLD OF WRESTLING **93**
OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS **94** | DRAWING BLOOD **98**

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED
2024
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
★★★★★
MARIAH MAY
MOST
IMPROVED WRESTLER
OF THE YEAR
★★★★★
AS VOTED BY
THE READERS OF
PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED
MAGAZINE
AEW
WOMEN'S WORLD

MARIAH MAY shines beside her AEW Women's title belt and Most Improved Wrestler plaque. But how did the World champ fare in this month's ranking of the sport's Top 10 Women? Turn to "Official Wrestling Ratings" to find out.

Photograph **©ALL ELITE WRESTLING**

FROM THE VAULT

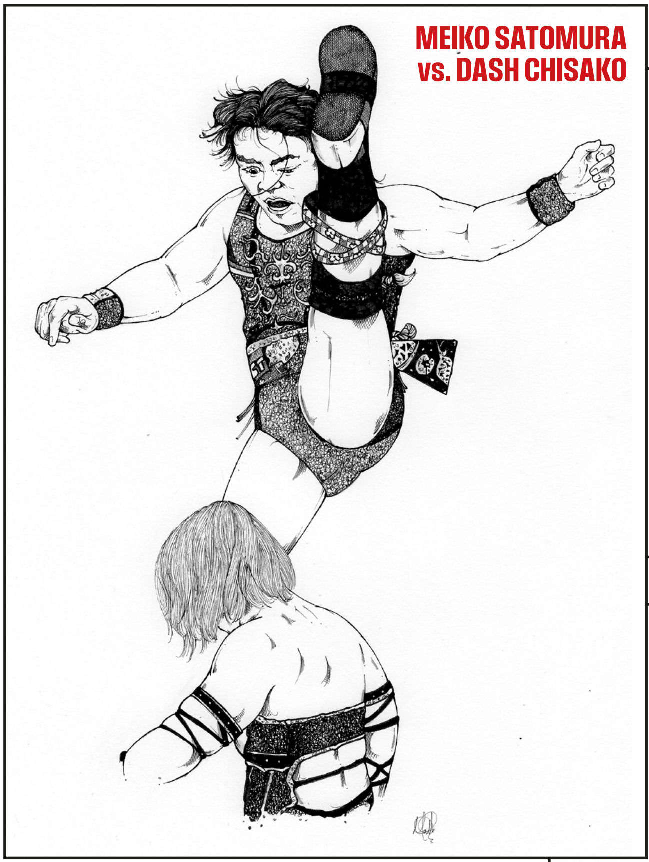


AUGUST 2015: Sasha Banks (Mercedes Mone) has **Becky Lynch** on the ropes during an NXT Women's title defense in Upper Darby, PA. Charlotte Flair and Bayley were also involved in the four-way bout, which saw Banks retain the championship.

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

FINAL BOUT

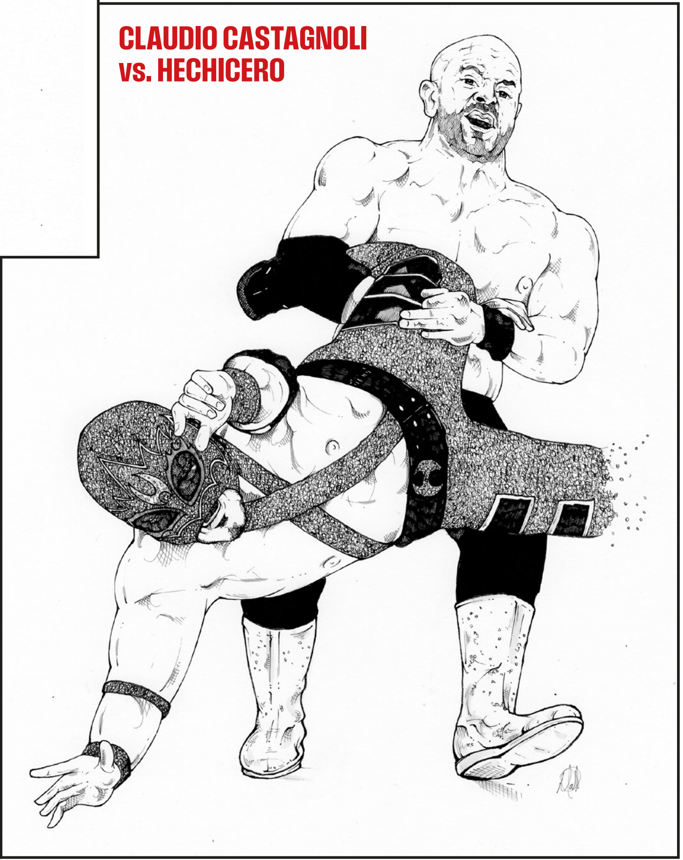
For his forthcoming book, artist **MATT CHARLTON** (aka **SHINING WIZARD DESIGNS**) illustrated a new scene from international wrestling every day. In this issue, we present our last two syndicated installments from the series.



MEIKO SATOMURA vs. DASH CHISAKO

December 8 | Sendai, Japan

Sendai Girls' Pro Wrestling takes over Sun Plaza Hall in Sendai to present its "Big Show," the culmination of a year's work and a highly entertaining event. Opening with Chi Chi making her first defense of the Sendai Girls' junior heavyweight championship over YUNA, a hard-hitting, feel-good tone is set for the evening … and it continues throughout. Miyuki Takase wins a delightful battle royal; Bob Bob Momo Banana (Mio Momono & Yurika Oka) endure attempted murder at the hands of VENY & Lena Kross to capture the Sendai Girls' tag title; and the night builds well to the drama of DASH Chisako defending her singles championship against company founder and living legend Meiko Satomura. Perhaps Satomura's greatest student, DASH goes particularly hard on her trainer, putting her own body on the line in an attempt to contain Satomura's indomitable spirit. However, following an emphatic Scorpio Rising, Satomura earns the victory and begins her journey toward retirement in 2025 as Sendai Girls' top champion.



CLAUDIO CASTAGNOLI vs. HECHICERO

December 13 | Mexico City, Mexico

Opening with a four-way women's bout to determine who the CMLL finalist shall be in the International Women's Cup Final at Wrestle Dynasty, tonight's event is co-promoted by AEW and CMLL with an eye on future events in NJPW—explaining perhaps why pleasing the crowd in attendance was not consistently the main focus. Everything starts brightly: Persephone booking her place in Tokyo, Las Chicas Indomables defeating Red Velvet & Viva Van, and the early going peaking as Flip Gordon retains his Historic middleweight championship over Rocky Romero in a scintillating match. But then Deonna Purrazzo defeats La Catalina, and, even in defeat, PAC outshines Volador Jr. By the time the main event arrives, Arena Mexico is itching for a hometown victory. Claudio Castagnoli and Hechicero have a very gritty contest, both men laying in heavy strikes to complement intriguing submission work. The match itself is very good, but the air leaves the room completely when Claudio drops Hechicero to earn the win before a seething arena.

FOR PERIOD ENDED DECEMBER 15, 2024

For decades now, *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* has helped readers keep tabs on the best and brightest grapplers from around the world. Now, our widely read Ratings section is bigger and better than ever!

HEAVYWEIGHT

1 **CODY RHODES**
(1) WWE Undisputed Universal champion
Atlanta, GA

2 **GUNTHER**
(3) WWE World heavyweight champion
Vienna, Austria

3 **JON MOXLEY**
(2) AEW World champion
Cincinnati, OH

4 **ZACK SABRE JR.**
(4) IWGP World heavyweight champion
Isle of Sheppey, U.K.

5 **NIC NEMETH**
(5) TNA World champion
Hollywood, FL

6 **ALBERTO EL PATRON**
(10) AAA Mega champion
San Luis Potosi, Mexico

7 **KAITO KIYOMIYA**
(8) GHC heavyweight champion
Saitama, Japan

8 **BRON BREAKKER**
(-) WWE Intercontinental champion
Atlanta, GA

9 **MOOSE**
(-) TNA X division champion
Atlanta, GA

10 **DAVEY BOY SMITH JR.**
(-) AJPW Triple Crown champion
Calgary, AB

WOMEN

1 **LIV MORGAN**
(4) WWE Women's World champion
Elmwood Park, NJ

2 **MASHA SLAMOVICH**
(5) TNA Knockouts World champion
Moscow, Russia

3 **NIA JAX**
(3) WWE Women's champion
San Diego, CA

4 **TAM NAKANO**
(1) World of Stardom champion
Aichi, Japan

5 **MARIAH MAY**
(2) AEW Women's World champion
London, U.K.

6 **ZEUXIS**
(10) CMLL Women's World champion
San Juan, Puerto Rico

7 **ATHENA**
(-) ROH Women's World champion
Dallas, TX

8 **MERCEDES MONE**
(7) AEW TBS/NJPW STRONG Women's champion
Boston, MA

9 **MAYU IWATANI**
(8) IWGP Women's champion
Yamaguchi, Japan

10 **SAREEE**
(-) Marigold champion
Tokyo, Japan

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

JON MOXLEY

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

MERCEDES MONE

WWE RAW
MEN

Ⓒ **GUNTHER**
(C) Vienna, Austria

1–BRON BREAKKER
(1) Atlanta, GA
2– DAMIAN PRIEST
(4) New York, NY
3–SETH ROLLINS
(-) Davenport, IA
4–DREW McINTYRE
(-) Ayr, Scotland
5–LUDWIG KAISER
(-) Hamburg, Germany

WWE RAW
WOMEN

Ⓒ **LIV MORGAN**
(C) Elmwood Park, NJ

1–IYO SKY
(1) Tokyo, Japan
2–RHEA RIPLEY
(3) Adelaide, South Australia
3–LYRA VALKYRIA
(2) Dublin, Ireland
4–DAKOTA KAI
(-) Auckland, New Zealand
5–IVY NILE
(-) Knoxville, TN

SMACKDOWN
MEN

Ⓒ **CODY RHODES**
(C) Atlanta, GA

1–SHINSUKE NAKAMURA
(-) Kyoto, Japan
2–LA KNIGHT
(1) Las Vegas, NV
3–CARMELO HAYES
(3) Worcester, MA
4–ANDRADE
(2) Gomez Palacio, Mexico
5–BRAUN STROWMAN
(-) Sherrills Ford, NC

SMACKDOWN
WOMEN

Ⓒ **NIA JAX**
(C) San Diego, CA

1–CHELSEA GREEN
(-) Victoria, BC
2–MICHIN
(1) Los Angeles, CA
3–BAYLEY
(3) San Jose, CA
4–TIFFANY STRATTON
(5) Prior Lake, MN
5–BIANCA BELAIR
(-) Knoxville, TN

AEW
MEN

Ⓒ **JON MOXLEY**
(C) Cincinnati, OH

1–KONOSUKE TAKESHITA
(2) Osaka, Japan
2–DANIEL GARCIA
(-) Buffalo, NY
3–ADAM COLE
(-) Panama City, FL
4–SWERVE STRICKLAND
(-) Tacoma, WA
5–JAY WHITE
(-) Auckland, New Zealand

AEW
WOMEN

Ⓒ **MARIAH MAY**
(C) London, U.K

1–MERCEDES MONE
(1) Boston, MA
2–ANNA JAY
(3) Brunswick, GA
3–MINA SHIRAKAWA
(-) Tokyo, Japan
4–WILLOW NIGHTINGALE
(2) Long Island, NY
5–PENELOPE FORD
(-) Philadelphia, PA

TNA
MEN

Ⓒ **NIC NEMETH**
(C) Hollywood, FL

1–MOOSE
(1) Atlanta, GA
2–MIKE SANTANA
(2) New York, NY
3–JOE HENDRY
(-) Edinburgh, Scotland
4–ACE AUSTIN
(-) Atlantic City, NJ
5–FRANKIE KAZARIAN
(5) Anaheim, CA

TNA
KNOCKOUTS

Ⓒ **MASHA SLAMOVICH**
(C) Moscow, Russia

1–ROSEMARY
(4) Winnipeg, MB
2–ASH BY ELEGANCE
(2) Cleveland, OH
3–TASHA STEELZ
(3) Brick City, NJ
4–JORDYNNE GRACE
(1) Austin, TX
5–XIA BROOKSIDE
(-) Liverpool, U.K.

NJPW

Ⓒ **ZACK SABRE JR.**
(C) Isle of Sheppey, U.K.

1–SHOTA UMINO
(4) Tokyo, Japan
2–DAVID FINLAY
(3) Atlanta, GA
3–SHINGO TAKAGI
(2) Yamanashi, Japan
4–DOUKI
(5) Kanagawa, Japan
5–HIROMU TAKAHASHI
(-) Tokyo, Japan

STARDOM

Ⓒ **TAM NAKANO**
(C) Aichi, Japan

1–NATSUPOI
(1) Kanagawa, Japan
2–MAYU IWATANI
(-) Yamaguchi, Japan
3–HAZUKI
(5) Fukuoka, Japan
4–KOGUMA
(4) Fukuoka, Japan
5–SAYA KAMITANI
(-) Kanagawa, Japan

OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS

Ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or tag team. Unless submitted by promoters, ratings are compiled by a committee consisting of Kevin McElvaney, Jason McVeigh, Kristen Ashly, Harry Burkett, Paul Pratt, and STRIGGA (Cagematch.net, Purolove.com). The numbers in parentheses indicate a wrestler's position in that category last issue.

TAG TEAM

1 **SAITO BROTHERS**
Jun & Rei Saito
(5) All Japan tag team champions

2 **DIY**
Johnny Gargano & Tommaso Ciampa
(-) WWE tag team champions

3 **LOS INGOBERNABLES DE JAPON**
Hiromu Takahashi & Tetsuya Naito
(-) NJPW World tag league winners

4 **FRAXIOM**
Axiom & Nathan Frazer
(-) NXT tag team champions

5 **PRIVATE PARTY**
QUEN & ZAY
(-) AEW World tag team champions

6 **H.A.T.E.**
Momo Watanabe & Thekla
(-) Stardom tag team champions

7 **STARS**
Hanan & Saya Iida
(-) Goddesses of Stardom Tag League winners

8 **MOTOR CITY MACHINE GUNS**
Alex Shelley & Chris Sabin
(4) Former WWE tag team champions

9 **THE HARDYS**
Jeff & Matt Hardy
(9) TNA World tag team champions

10 **LOS HERMANOS CHAVEZ**
Angel de Oro & Niebla Roja
(10) CMLL World tag team champions

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

MARK BRISCOE

MOST POPULAR

1–CODY RHODES
2–JEY USO
3–JOE HENDRY
4–RHEA RIPLEY
5–LA KNIGHT
6–CM PUNK
7–WILLOW NIGHTINGALE
8–MARK BRISCOE
9–MINA SHIRAKAWA
10–GIULIA

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

MJF

MOST HATED

1–DOMINIK MYSTERIO
2–SOLO SIKOA
3–MJF
4–CHRIS JERICHO
5–LIV MORGAN
6–THE DEATH RIDERS
7–DREW McINTYRE
8–NIA JAX
9–JACK PERRY
10–MERCEDES MONE

MLW
MEN

Ⓒ SATOSHI KOJIMA
(C) Tokyo, Japan
1–MATT RIDDLE
(1) Las Vegas, NV
2–DONOVAN DIJAK
(3) Worcester, MA
3–MADS KRUGGER
(2) Unknown
4–KENTA
(5) Tokyo, Japan
5–MINORU SUZUKI
(4) Kanagawa, Japan

NWA
MEN

Ⓒ THOM LATIMER
(C) Chesterfield, U.K.
1–MIMS
(1) Clarksville, TN
2–EC3
(4) Boca Raton, FL
3–MAX THE IMPALER
(3) The Wasteland
4–SILAS MASON
(2) Blount County, TN
5–COLBY CORINO
(-) Philadelphia, PA

NXT
MEN

Ⓒ TRICK WILLIAMS
(C) Columbia, SC
1–TONY D'ANGELO
(1) Chicago, IL
2–OBA FEMI
(3) Lagos, Nigeria
3–RIDGE HOLLAND
(4) Yorkshire, U.K.
4–JE'VON EVANS
(-) Greensboro, NC.
5–ETHAN PAGE
(2) Hamilton, ON

ROH
MEN

Ⓒ CHRIS JERICHO
(C) Winnipeg, MB
1–BRIAN CAGE
(2) Chico, CA
2–TOMOHIRO ISHII
(-) Kanagawa, Japan
3– LEE MORIARTY
(4) Pittsburgh, PA
4–MARK BRISCOE
(1) Sandy Fork, DE
5–LEE JOHNSON
(-) Gary, IN

AAA
MEN

Ⓒ ALBERTO EL PATRON
(C) San Luis Potosi, Mexico
1–LAREDO KID
(3) Nuevo Laredo, Mexico
2–EL MESIAS
(-) Bayamon, PR
3– MATT RIDDLE
(1) Las Vegas, NV
4–OCTAGON JR.
(2) Mexico City, Mexico
5–HJO DEL VIKINGO
(5) Puebla, Mexico

MLW
WOMEN

Ⓒ JANAI KAI
(C) Washington, D.C.
1–DELMI EXO
(2) Providence, RI
2–PERSEPHONE
(3) El Paso, TX
3– LLUVIA
(4) Mexico City, Mexico
4–MIYU YAMASHITA
(1) Fukuoka, Japan
5–GIGI REY
(5) Edmonton, AB

NWA
WOMEN

Ⓒ KENZIE PAIGE
(C) Sevierville, TN
1–BIG MAMA
(1) Cincinnati, OH
2–HALEY J
(-) Unknown
3–TIFFANY NIEVES
(3) New York, NY
4–NATALIA MARKOVA
(2) Moscow, Russia
5–KYLIE PAIGE
(5) Sevierville, TN

NXT
WOMEN

Ⓒ ROXANNE PEREZ
(C) Laredo, TX
1–FALLON HENLEY
(1) Chelsea, MI
2–GIULIA
(5) London, U.K.
3–LOLA VICE
(-) Miami, FL
4–STEPHANIE VAQUER
(4) San Fernando, Chile
5–ZARIA
(-) Queensland, Australia

ROH
WOMEN

Ⓒ ATHENA
(C) Dallas, TX
1–RED VELVET
(1) Miami, FL
2–TAYA VALKYRIE
(-) Victoria, BC
3–LEYLA HIRSCH
(-) Moscow, Russia
4–ABADON
(4) The Black Hills
5–DIAMANTE
(-) Miami Gardens, FL

AAA
WOMEN

Ⓒ FLAMMER
(C) Monterrey, Mexico
1–LA HIEDRA
(1) Nuevo Laredo, Mexico
2– FABY APACHE
(2) Mexico City, Mexico
3–CHIK TORMENTA
(3) Guadalajara, Mexico
4–DALYS
(-) Panama City, Panama
5–REINA DORADA
(-) Mexico City, Mexico

RATINGS ANALYSIS

PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING IS an ever-changing landscape. Case in point: None of the wrestlers listed on our Heavyweight or Tag Team Top 10s from our 2023 Awards issue appear in the same rankings this issue. On the Women's list, **Athena (#7)** is the only familiar name from a year ago to make an appearance. This, of course, is part of the excitement of the sport. If you find yourself not enjoying a particular era of wrestling, give it a year—because the faces at the top are sure to change.

A look back at our Ratings throughout 2024 shows us who the most consistent competitors were. **Cody Rhodes (#1)** topped our heavyweight rankings seven times throughout the year. No one else managed to do so more than once. The "*PWI* 500" top-ranked wrestler and reader-voted Wrestler of the Year remained as reliably great as his accolades suggest.

We saw more parity over on the Women and Tag Team lists. **Bayley**—who this month didn't crack the Top 10 Women's list—had three appearances on top. **Liv Morgan (#1)** did it twice. While **The Saito Brothers (#1)** were regular fixtures of our Tag Team rankings all year, this issue is the first time Jun & Rei Saito ranked in the top spot.

PHOTO BY GEORGE TAHINOS

ATHENA WEARS DOWN BILLIE STARKZ WITH A CRAVAT HOLD DURING ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL TITLE DEFENSE AT RING OF HONOR'S FINAL BATTLE.

CMLL
MEN

Ⓒ **GRAN GUERRERO**
(C) Gomez Palacio, Mexico
1–MISTICO
(4) Mexico City, Mexico
2–ATLANTIS JR.
(5) Guadalajara, Mexico
3–ESFINGE
(3) Mexico City, Mexico
4–FLIP GORDON
(-) Kalispell, MT
5–MASCARA DORADA.
(-) Guadalajara, Mexico

NOAH

Ⓒ **KAITO KIYOMIYA**
(C) Saitama, Japan
1–MANABU SOYA
(1) Nagano, Japan
2–DAGA
(3) Mexico City, Mexico
3–ULKA SASAKI
(2) Shizuoka, Japan
4–NAOMICHI MARUFUJI
(-) Saitama, Japan
5–GO SHIOZAKI
(5) Kumamoto, Japan

AJPW

Ⓒ **DAVEY BOY SMITH JR.**
(1) Calgary, AB
1–JUN SAITO
(-) Miyagi, Japan
2– RYUKI HONDA
(-) Tokyo, Japan
3–KENTO MIYAHARA
(5) Fukuoka, Japan
4–YUMA ANZAI
(4) Gunma, Japan
5–YUKO MIYOMOTO
(-) Hiroshima, Japan

INDEPENDENT

Ⓒ **KRULE**
(C) Unknown
1–MARCUS MATHERS
(1) Philadelphia, PA
2–KYLIE RAE
(4) Chicago, IL
3–STEPHEN WOLF
(-) Peoria, IL
4–NEIL DIAMOND CUTTER
(-) Sebly, SD
5–BRAD HOLLISTER
(-) Chicopee, MA

PROGRESS
MEN

Ⓒ **LUKE JACOBS**
(C) Manchester, U.K.
1–LEON SLATER
(3) Bradford, U.K.
2–RICKY KNIGHT JR.
(2) Norwich, U.K.
3–MAN LIKE DEREISS
(1) Birmingham, U.K.
4–CARA NOIR
(4) Essex, U.K.
5–SIMON MILLER
(-) London, U.K.

CMLL
WOMEN

Ⓒ **ZEUXIS**
(C) San Juan, Puerto Rico
1–SANELY
(-) Torreon, Mexico
2–PERSEPHONE
(3) El Paso, TX
3–REYNA ISIS
(2) Mexico
4–LLUVIA
(1) Mexico City, Mexico
5–LA CATALINA
(-) Santiago, Chile

TJPW

Ⓒ **MIU WATANABE**
(C) Saitama, Japan
1–YUKI ARAI
(1) Kyoto, Japan
2–RYO MIZUNAMI
(-) Aichi, Japan
3–MAKI ITOH
(-) Fukuoka, Japan
4–MIYU YAMASHITA
(-) Fukuoka, Japan
5–SUZUME
(2) Ibaraki, Japan

MARIGOLD

Ⓒ **SAREEE**
(C) Tokyo, Japan
1–MIKU AONO
(1) Saitama, Japan
2–NATSUMI SHOWZUKI
(2) Hyogo, Japan
3–NAO ISHIKAWA
(-) Ishikawa, Japan
4–BOZILLA
(4) Hannover, Germany.
5–MYLA GRACE
(-) Belfast, Northern Ireland

PAN-AFRIKAN

Ⓒ **SUGE D**
(C) Augusta, GA
1–JORDAN BLADE
(1) Richmond, VA
2–PAPA JACE
(2) Las Vegas, NV
3–EEL O'NEAL
(3) Baltimore, MD
4–SHELTON BENJAMIN
(4) Orangeburg, SC
5–BILLY DIXON
(5) New York, NY

PROGRESS
WOMEN

Ⓒ **RHIO**
(C) Preston, U.K.
1– NINA SAMUELS
(1) London, U.K.
2–EMERSYN JAYNE
(5) Glasgow, Scotland.
3–LIZZY EVO
(4) Liverpool, U.K.
4–KANJI
(2) Nottingham, U.K.
5–SESSION MOTH MARTINA
(3) Dublin, Ireland

JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT

1 **DOUKI**
(1) IWGP junior heavyweight champion
Kanagawa, Japan

2 **DRAGON LEE**
(-) WWE Speed champion
Tala, Mexico

3 **LAREDO KID**
(-) AAA cruiserweight champion
Nuevo Laredo, Mexico

4 **NARUKI DOI**
(4) AJPW junior heavyweight champion
Nara, Japan

5 **DAGA**
(5) GHC junior heavyweight champion
Mexico City, Mexico

6 **ATLANTIS JR.**
(-) CMLL Historic light heavyweight champion
Guadalajara, Mexico

7 **YAMATO**
(-) Open the Brave Gate/Dream Gate champion
Iwate, Japan

8 **MISTICO**
(8) MLW World middleweight champion
Mexico City, Mexico

9 **IKUTO HIDAKA**
(9) BJW junior heavyweight champion
Shimane, Japan

10 **ALEX TAYLOR**
(-) NWA junior heavyweight champion
Gallatin, TX

CAGE MATCH VARIATIONS

1–CLASSIC STEEL CAGE
2–WARGAMES
3–HELL IN A CELL
4–SIX SIDES OF STEEL
5–BARBED WIRE
6–ELIMINATION CHAMBER
7–LION'S DEN
8–CAGE OF DEATH
9–ASYLUM
10–PUNJABI PRISON

PHOTO BY KEVIN McELVANEY

KYLIE RAE

WWE ID TALENT

1–MARCUS MATHERS
2–KYLIE RAE
3–BRYCE DONOVAN
4–JACK CARTWHEEL
5–ZARA ZAKHER
6–ZAYDA STEEL
7–AARON ROURKE
8–ICE WILLIAMS
9–RICKY SMOKES
10–SEAN LEGACY

WRESTLER ACCESSORIES

1–MR. SOCKO
2–RICK MARTEL'S ARROGANCE
3–STING'S BAT
4–KURT ANGLE'S GOLD MEDALS
5–TRIPLE H'S SLEDGEHAMMER
6–GODWINNS' SLOP BUCKET
7–MOPPY
8–THE LIST OF JERICHO
9–SANTINO MARELLA'S COBRA
10–JAKE HAGER'S HAT

—Sent by Andy Coppola, Philadelphia, PA

DRAGONGATE: CHAMPION–YAMATO; **1**-Dragon Dia: **2**-Kota Minoura; **3**-Strong Machine J; **4**-KAGETORA; **5**-Kzy

DDT: CHAMPION–Chris Brookes; **1**-MAO; **2**-Daisuke Sasaki; **3**-Danshoku Dieno; **4**-Yuki Ueno; **5**-Shinya Aoki

WWC: CHAMPION–Ray Gonzalez; **1**-Mike Nice; **2**-Tony Leyenda; **3**-Xavant; **4**-El Gigante Nihan; **5**-El Informante

OTT: CHAMPION–Big Damo; **1**-Charlie Sterling; **2**-The Sem; **3**-Jay; **4**-Angel Reyes; **5**- Cosmos

REVOLUTION PRO WRESTLING: CHAMPION–Luke Jacobs; **1**-Will Kaven; **2**-Michael Oku; **3**-Robbie X; **4**-Charlie Sterling; **5**-Ricky Knight Jr.

WXW: CHAMPION–Peter Tihanyi; **1**-Anita Vaughan; **2**-Mike D Vecchio; **3**-Laurance Roman; **4**-Robert Dreissker; **5**-Levaniel

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: CHAMPION–Darius Carter; **1**-LA Vin; **2**-Abs Armstrong; **3**-Mr. Ooh La La; **4**-Shane Douglas; **5**-Se Morrigan

GAME CHANGER WRESTLING: CHAMPION–Mance Warner; **1**-Joey Janela; **2**-EFFY; **3**-Gringo Loco; **4**-John Wayne Murdoch; **5**-Allie Katch

DEFY WRESTLING: CHAMPION–KENTA; **1**-SCHAFF; **2**-Nick Wayne; **3**-Cody Chhun; **4**-Mustafa Ali; **5**-Guillermo Rosas

OHIO VALLEY WRESTLING: CHAMPION–Mt. Khadeem; **1**-EC3; **2**-Dustin Jackson; **3**-Star Rider; **4**-Kal Herro; **5**-Tony Gunn

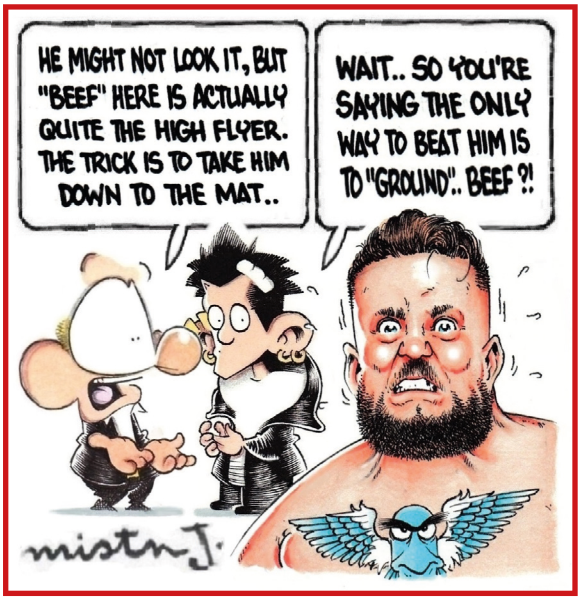
SENDAI GIRLS': CHAMPION–Meiko Satomura; **1**-DASH Chisako; **2**-Mika Iwata; **3**-Miyuki Takase; **4**-Lena Kross; **5**-Chi Chi

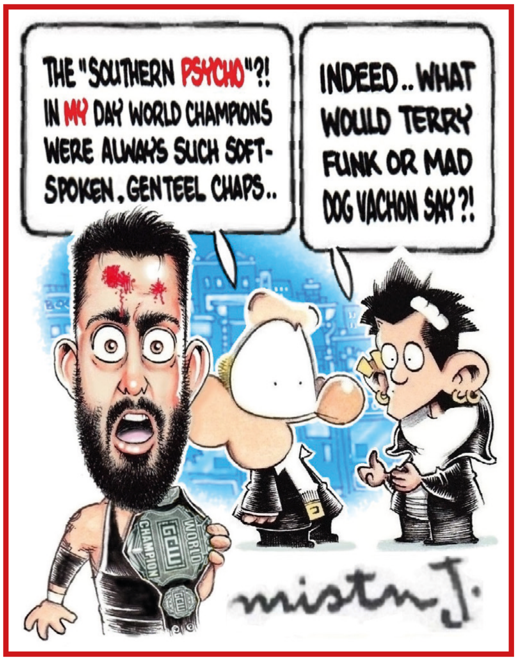
Want to be an honorary member of the *PWI* Ratings committee? Simply make a top 10 of your choosing, then email it to pwi@kappapublishing.com

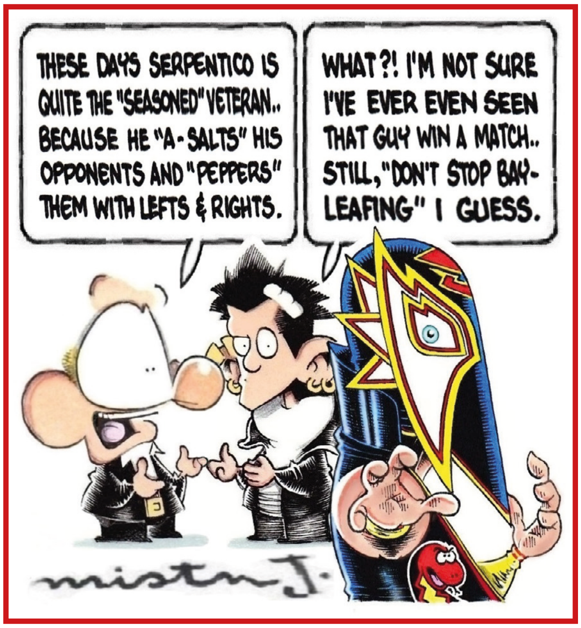
Each issue, we'll include a reader submission or two. Have fun! And don't forget to include your name and hometown, so that we can credit you.

DRAWING BLOOD

BY JASON CONLAN


HE MIGHT NOT LOOK IT, BUT "BEEF" HERE IS ACTUALLY QUITE THE HIGH FLYER. THE TRICK IS TO TAKE HIM DOWN TO THE MAT..
WAIT.. SO YOU'RE SAYING THE ONLY WAY TO BEAT HIM IS TO "GROUND".. BEEF ?!


THE "SOUTHERN PSYCHO"?! IN MY DAY WORLD CHAMPIONS WERE ALWAYS SUCH SOFT-SPOKEN, GENTEEL CHAPS..
INDEED.. WHAT WOULD TERRY FUNK OR MAD DOG VACHON SAY?!


THESE DAYS SERPENTICO IS QUITE THE "SEASONED" VETERAN.. BECAUSE HE "A-SALTS" HIS OPPONENTS AND "PEPPERS" THEM WITH LEFTS & RIGHTS.
WHAT?! I'M NOT SURE I'VE EVER EVEN SEEN THAT GUY WIN A MATCH.. STILL, "DON'T STOP BAY-LEAFING" I GUESS.

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